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Concordia University–Portland
College of Education
Doctorate of Education Program

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Interconnectedness: The Lived Experiences of Six Middle School Employees During the First
Two Years of Restorative Practices Implementation

Kathleen Carroll Bevins

Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Professional Leadership, Inquiry, and Transformation

Mark Jimenez, Ed.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

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Abstract

Restorative practices are being used throughout the world as a response to problem behaviors in schools in an effort to stop the use of ineffective and disproportionately-applied exclusionary discipline methods. Research has been primarily quantitative in nature; thus, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of six middle school staff members during the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation. The restorative justice theoretical framework was used to ground this phenomenological study. This framework encompasses the origins of restorative justice, affect theory, and reintegrative shame theory (Braithwaite, 1989a; Tomkins, 2008; Tomkins & Karon, 1962; Tomkins & McCarter, 1964). Husserl's transcendental phenomenological approach was used to create information-rich descriptions that capture the essence of study participants lived experiences. Using Husserl's approach to phenomenological research, Castillo-Montoya's (2016) Moustakas-based (1994) Interview Refinement Protocol was employed to develop the questions for the two-tiered interview format used in this study. An adapted version of Yüksel and Yildirim's (2015) step-by-step data analysis framework was used to develop the essence of the collected data surrounding the participants' lived experiences of school-based restorative practices implementation. The five core themes that emerged from study participants' lived experiences were the role of the "why," the impact on school culture and climate, daily applications of restorative approaches, cultivating a sense of belonging and emotional safety, and critical factors for restorative practices implementation.

Keywords: affect theory, bracketing, exclusionary discipline, horizontalizing, phenomenology, reintegrative shame theory, restorative justice, restorative justice theory, restorative practices, zero-tolerance policies

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my late father, Michael Lawrence Carroll (1948–2013).

Dad, I know that you have been by my side every step of the way on this doctoral journey. I could not have accomplished this without you. I love you, and thank you.

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I would like to acknowledge Concordia University–Portland professors, student advisors, and staff and thank them for a challenging, transformative, and highly rewarding doctoral experience. I would like to acknowledge my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Mark Jimenez, for his encouragement during the second half of the dissertation process, as well as Dr. Candis Best who served as my Dissertation Chair during the first half of the process. To my Content Specialist, Dr. Wanda Fernandopulle, and my Content Reader, Dr. Matthew Basham, thank you for your constructive feedback and guidance. I would also like to express my gratitude to Renee Leonard, my advisor, who supported and encouraged me throughout this journey.

I was raised to sincerely value the learning process, and there is no way that this would have been possible without such a solid foundation from my parents. From a young age, they taught my brother and me to be inquisitive and to pay attention to the world around us. They also instilled in us that as human beings, we are a part of something far greater than ourselves, and with that comes tremendous responsibility. This set me on the road to becoming an educator. Mom and Dad, you have always encouraged me to work hard and never give up once I set my mind to something. This time, it happened to be my doctorate.

Completing my doctorate would not have been possible without the ongoing encouragement of my family, friends, and colleagues. To my husband, Zachary Bevins, thank you for your patience over the last four years. When I have become frustrated, you have been my rock, and without you, I could not have met this goal. And finally, to my beautiful daughter, Helena McDermott, your love of learning inspires me each and every day. Thank you for being you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Human beings are hardwired to connect with one another, and human connectivity is rooted in the concept of “relationship” (Braithwaite, 1989a; Brown, 2018; International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP), 2018; Nathanson, 1992; Tomkins, 2008). Conflict resolution is an essential skill for healthy functioning in all aspects of human life (Brown, 2018; IIRP, 2018; Wachtel, 2016), and restorative practices are a research-based way to teach and model healthy communication and responses to wrongdoing in any setting (Brown, 2018; Daniels, 2013; Dickenson-Gilmore & LaPrairie, 2005). Restorative practices are rooted in the circle-keeping traditions of indigenous and aboriginal peoples and focus on community building, community repairing, and community reconciliation (Brown, 2018; Dickenson-Gilmore & La Prairie, 2005; Eiht, 2011). Within the last 50 years, these practices have become supported by a restorative justice theoretical framework that encompasses research surrounding human “affect” and “shame” (Braithwaite, 1989a; Nathanson, 1992; Tomkins, 2008). This theoretical framework emphasizes the separation of the deed from the doer and views wrongdoing as the harming of relationships (Braithwaite, 1989a; Nathanson, 1992). Social scientists are translating this theoretical framework into a practical application within various settings, such as criminal justice, business, and education (IIRP, 2018).

School employees continuously seek ways to build community, navigate conflict, and repair relational harm that has been caused (Brown, 2018; IIRP, 2018; Wachtel, 2016). Increasingly, this is being attained through school-based restorative practices implementation, which embodies a continuum of practices and/or tiered systems of support to both prevent and respond to conflict in the school setting (Brown, 2018; Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2010; Hashim, Strunk, & Dhaliwal, 2018; Johnson & Weaver, 2013; Wachtel, 2016). This is

accomplished through intentional community-building practices, direct instruction of conflict resolution skills, and the modeling of an alternative approach to school discipline through policies and procedures by all school employees (Brown, 2018; Dickenson-Gilmore & La Prairie, 2005; Pranis, 2005).

“Staff buy-in” is identified by restorative practices experts as an essential component for sustainable school-based restorative practices implementation (Brown, 2018; Denver School-Based Restorative Practices Partnership, 2017; IIRP, 2018). Because restorative practices run counter to the traditional, Westernized responses to harm (Braithwaite, 2018; Eiht, 2011; IIRP, 2018; Sherman & Strang, 2007), most school employees grew up experiencing punitive consequences and routinely draw upon those experiences when delivering punitive responses to problem behaviors (Costello et al., 2010). Thus, school-based restorative practices implementation requires a significant shift in thinking about how school employees respond to harm and/or wrongdoing in the school setting even though research supports the shift from punitive to restorative (Brown, 2018; Costello, et al., 2010; IIRP, 2018).

A significant amount of quantitative research exists to support school-based restorative practices implementation (Boyes-Watson et al., 2015; Costello et al., 2010; Fronius, Persson, Guckenburg, Hurley, & Petrosino, 2016; Wachtel, 2016). Numerous studies have shown that school-based restorative practices reduce overall problem behavior referrals and recidivism of problem behaviors by individual students (Costello et al., 2010; Fronius et al., 2016; IIRP, 2018; Wachtel, 2016). Quantitative studies have also shown that restorative practices decrease aggressive student behaviors and creates safer schools (Bonell et al., 2014; Fox, 2015; Goldys, 2016; Sherman, Strang, Barnes, & Woods, 2006). The use of a restorative approach has been shown to decrease the application of exclusionary discipline practices such as suspension and

expulsion when problem behaviors occur in schools that have implemented restorative practices (Costello et al., 2010; Ruiz, 2017). This alternative approach to school discipline is also associated with a reduction of the disparities associated with exclusionary discipline policies and procedures (Albrecht, 2010; Brown, 2018; Ingraham et al., 2016; Kimball, 2013; Kline, 2016; Mansfield, Fowler, & Rainbolt, 2018).

Qualitative restorative practices research is often found in the form of case study analyses (Brown, 2018; Sumner et al., 2010). There is limited phenomenological research surrounding restorative practices implementation in K–12 school settings (Disney, 2018; Loomer, 2017; Meagher, 2009; Polizzi, 2011). There are no known transcendental phenomenological studies that focus solely on the creation of descriptions of school employees' lived experiences during the initial stages of school-based restorative practices implementation. Thus, a clearer understanding of employees' lived experiences can aid in the strategic planning of school-based restorative practices implementation. Descriptive analyses of school employees' lived experiences can provide school leaders with a deeper understanding of what their staff may experience should they begin the journey of school-based restorative practices implementation. Rich descriptions will provide school stakeholders with a clear and realistic understanding of what school employees may experience, so that proactive measures can be taken to meet the needs of school employees.

Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework

School-based restorative justice, often synonymously called restorative practices, is being used to improve school climate and culture in the U.S. through the use of a tiered approach to building community and repairing harm (Brown, 2018; Hashim, Strunk, & Dhaliwal, 2018; Johnson & Weaver, 2013). School climate and culture are often measured by the perception of

safety within an educational facility or organization (TeachPlus, 2018). Concerns about school safety were the impetus for the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach to school discipline in the 1990s. However, there is a large body of evidence that illustrates the ineffectiveness of the resulting punitive policies and exclusionary practices (Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Kline, 2016; Kupchik, 2010). Research has shown that there are significant racial disparities in school behavior referrals and suspensions, which illustrates inequities of delivery of punitive discipline (Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Kline, 2016; Kupchik, 2010). The ineffectiveness and inequities of punitive responses have given rise to the elimination of zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline practices (Brown, 2018; IIRP, 2018; TeachPlus, 2018).

Many policymakers, researchers, and educators believe this trend is a positive move towards creating safer school communities (Kline, 2016; Kupchik, 2010); however, eliminating zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline will not solve school climate perceptions and safety issues without the implementation of a research-based alternative (Brown, 2018; TeachPlus, 2018). Laws themselves may reduce suspensions; however, when zero-tolerance policies are eliminated and suspensions are limited without an alternative system in place, an unintended consequence that may result is a negative perception of school climate and safety by school employees (TeachPlus, 2018).

An alternative school discipline approach with promising nascent research is restorative justice, and school districts throughout the U.S. are implementing restorative practices initiatives in an effort to transform school safety, climate, and culture (Brown, 2018; Daniels, 2013; Dickenson-Gilmore & La Prairie, 2005). This transition to a new system of restorative values and procedures requires an intense commitment from school stakeholders to create this type of transformation in a sustainable way, and proponents of school-based restorative practices

emphasize the importance of strategic planning (Brown, 2018; IIRP, 2018). Staff buy-in has repeatedly been identified as a critical foundational component to sustainable implementation (Denver School-Based Restorative Practices Partnership, 2017; Fronius et al., 2016; IIRP, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

There is a large body of statistical evidence illustrating that the replacement of punitive discipline systems with a restorative approach results in a reduction of behavior referrals in schools, a reduction in the recidivism of problem behaviors, a reduction in the use of exclusionary discipline practices, and a reduction of the disparities found in traditional, retributive school discipline systems (Boyes-Watson et al., 2015; Brown, 2018; Costello et al., Fronius et al., 2016; Pranis, 2005; Wachtel, 2016). Worldwide, quantitative research studies and meta-analyses have illustrated the effectiveness of school-based restorative practices implementation (Boyes-Watson et al., 2015; Brown, 2018; Costello et al., Fronius et al., 2016; Pranis, 2005; Wachtel, 2016). However, there is limited qualitative research that provides a descriptive understanding of school employees' lived experiences during implementation (Disney, 2018; Loomer, 2017; Meagher, 2009; Polizzi, 2011).

Descriptive analyses of school employees' lived experiences can provide school leaders with a deeper understanding of what their staff may experience should they undertake school-based restorative practices implementation. Existing phenomenological studies focused on restorative justice occur in multiple settings (Dedinsky, 2012; Meagher, 2009). Those that occur solely within the K–12 school setting focus on deriving meaning from the lived experiences of a mixture of school stakeholders within their samplings of study participants that include students, staff, parents, and community members (Disney, 2018; Loomer, 2017; Meagher, 2009). These phenomenological studies were not executed solely to describe stakeholders' lived experiences,

but rather they sought to find meaning through the use of a hermeneutical approach (Dedinsky, 2011; Loomer, 2017; Polizzi, 2011).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to provide rich descriptions of school employees' lived experiences to create a more robust, holistic body of restorative practices research. Using a transcendental phenomenological approach, this study utilized a research-based, in-depth interview format to develop descriptions of the lived experiences of six middle school employees' experiences during the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation. This study's analyses will assist all school employees in identifying what they and their fellow staff members may experience during school-based restorative practices implementation, as well as how they might contribute to providing a more positive collective experience for all stakeholders.

Research Question

What are the lived experiences of school employees during the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

Phenomenology attempts to make sense of a particular phenomenon based upon the personal, lived experiences of study participants. In the context of this study, the phenomena were school-based restorative practices implementation. This study did not seek to develop theory itself; it aimed to identify the core themes of the lived experience through an exploration of study participants' experiences. The researcher explored the experiences of study participants using a two-tiered interview process that followed Castillo-Montoya's (2016) Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) Framework. This interview approach provided this study with rich, thick

descriptions in the form of two data sources- interview transcriptions and researcher notes (Bevans, 2014; Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Giorgi, 1997; Groenewald, 2004; Muswazi & Nhamo, 2013; Sousa, 2014). Systematic analyses of this study's data sources gleaned strong descriptions of school employees' lived experiences during the first two years of restorative practices implementation (Moustakas, 1994; Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). The researcher used an adapted version of the eight-step data analysis framework that was created by Yüksel and Yildirim (2015). Based upon the work of Moustakas (1994), this framework accounted for *epoché*, phenomenological reduction, imagination variation, and *essence* (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015).

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, these meanings were used for the following terms:

Affect theory. A social science theory identifying that human beings experience healthier relationships when they are free to express emotion or “affect,” their natural, biological responses to events and emotional stimuli (Tomkins, 2008).

Bracketing. A method used in qualitative research to lessen the opportunities for researcher bias and presuppositions (Moustakas, 1994).

Exclusionary discipline. Any type of school disciplinary practice that excludes a student from their educational setting; the most common forms are suspension and expulsion (Costenbader & Markson, 1998).

Horizontalizing. A method of organizing data through the creation of equally-valued meaning units (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015).

Phenomenology. An approach to qualitative research that focuses on the study of the distinct lived experiences of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Reintegrative shame theory. A social science theory that asserts the intent to shift the idea of an offender's shame from stigmatizing to reintegrative (Braithwaite, 1989a; Nathanson, 1992).

Restorative justice. A system of justice that focuses on making things "right" after a wrong has occurred, most commonly used to aid in the reconciliation between victims and offenders (IIRP, 2018).

Restorative justice theory. A theoretical framework grounded in the indigenous origins of restorative justice, affect theory, and reintegrative shame theory (Brown, 2018; IIRP, 2018; Wachtel, 2016).

Restorative practices. Restorative practices is a social science that studies how to build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision making. (IIRP, 2018).

Zero-tolerance policies. Policies that imposes a serious punishment on a student for a rule violation with the intent to reduce or change problem behavior (Costenbader & Markson, 1998).

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

A core underlying assumption of this study is that school safety, climate, and culture will continue to be at the forefront of educational initiatives and policy studies. This study assumes that restorative practices will continue to be used by schools as a research-based alternative to zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline practices. The researcher assumed that by following procedures that ensured the confidentiality of study participants, interviews would glean honest responses (Groenewald, 2004; Muswazi & Nhamo, 2013; Sousa, 2014). To assure that the interview questions would garner in-depth descriptions, the researcher used an Interview

Protocol Refinement framework to develop interview questions. Further, the study site was limited to one middle school, and so study participants all experienced the same phenomenon at the same time, and in the same place. The researcher made the assumption that a purposeful sampling of school employees would provide the descriptive data necessary to analyze and answer the research question (Creswell, 1998; Guetterman, 2015; Mason, 2010; Morse, 1994).

There are several delimitations set by the researcher for this study. The researcher used a transcendental phenomenological approach to answer the study's research question (Moustakas, 1994; Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). The practice of researcher bracketing aimed to prevent researcher bias in the study's data collection, and began with the creation of a Researcher Subjectivity Statement. In an effort to garner individualized responses, research-based, open-ended questions were used to guide their respective interviews (Bevan, 2014; Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Giorgi, 1997). The researcher took reasonable precautions to assure the confidentiality of study participants; any descriptions about study participants were collected through a voluntary demographics questionnaire (Groenewald, 2004; Muswazi & Nhamo, 2013; Sousa, 2014). The benefits and reliability of interview transcriptions and high-quality researcher notes, as well as researcher and participant data checks, aimed to enhance the truth-value of the data sources (Bevans, 2014; Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Giorgi, 1997). This study used research-based data analysis framework (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015), and the study results were presented through an expression of the *essence* of the lived experience that included textural evidence.

There are also some limitations of this study. It is important to note that while this study invited all employees to participate, there was no guarantee that the sampling would include a representation of school employees from both certified (administrators, school counselors, teachers) and noncertified (paraprofessionals, custodians, food and nutrition) staff. Another

limitation to be noted was the necessity to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of study participants; the researcher was only able to provide limited descriptions of participants that were based on voluntary information. Though this particular study did not seek to find *meaning* itself in the lived experiences of study participants, a lack of detailed information about study participants could limit the inferences that could be made from their responses. The decision to use a telephone interview format with notes taken as opposed to audio-recording, the second interview could limit the researcher's collection of textural evidence. Further, the researcher would not be able to "read" the non-verbal cues and body language of each study participant as their responses guide their interviews.

Summary of Chapter 1

This chapter included an overview of the literature surrounding school-based restorative practices, the methodology design approach used to answer the research question of this study, as well as the definitions of key terms. The researcher also included assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of this study. Chapter 2 will present the conceptual framework, a theoretical framework, a review of research and methodological research, a review of methodological issues, a synthesis of the research findings, and a critique of the previous literature. Chapter 3 will describe the research methodology and design approach, target population, participant selection, and instrumentation. The researcher will present the data collection techniques and data analysis framework, study validation, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 will present the study data, and the researcher will provide a descriptive analysis of the lived experiences of study participants. Chapter 5 will include a summary of the study's findings and an examination of how findings answer the research question. The researcher will make connections with the

restorative justice framework, current literature on restorative practices, implications of the research, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Restorative practices are being used worldwide to reduce incarceration rates and decrease criminal recidivism. Restorative practices are also used in schools as a research-based alternative to zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline. However, while countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Canada have been implementing restorative practices for well over a decade, the United States is in a more nascent phase in the paradigm shift from retributive justice to restorative justice (Brown, 2018; Daniels, 2013; Dickenson-Gilmore & La Prairie, 2005).

In urban American school districts, such as Oakland, Baltimore, and Chicago, school administrators are leading strategic initiatives focused on implementing restorative practices in response to these racial disparities in school discipline data. The primarily quantitative body of nascent restorative justice research in the United States shows promising results for reducing exclusionary discipline in schools and racial disproportionality of behavior referrals and suspensions (Costello et al., 2010; High, 2017; Kehoe, 2017; Kimball, 2013). However, there are concerns from educators that zero-tolerance policies and school suspensions are being eliminated without evidence-based structures in place to support the shift to restorative justice (TeachPlus, 2018). Without a research-based alternative to suspension, such as restorative practices, the elimination of exclusionary discipline can have a detrimental effect on school staff members' perceptions of school climate and safety.

Conceptual Framework

There has long been a need for research-based approaches to support schools in responding to problem behaviors; however, this became even more evident in the United States in the last two decades (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Widely implemented in the

1990s in response to school climate and safety concerns, zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline practices have led to even higher racially disproportionate rates of behavior referrals and suspensions (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Costello et al., 2010; DeMatthews, Olivarez, & Moussavi, 2017). Research also indicates that zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline practices are largely ineffective in reducing problem behaviors (IIRP, 2018; Kupchik, 2010; TeachPlus, 2018).

Disproportionalities of exclusionary discipline practices. Zero-tolerance policies often result in the use of exclusionary discipline practices, such as suspension and expulsion (IIRP, 2018; Skiba, 2014; Wachtel, 2016). A large body of evidence suggests that exclusionary discipline is directly related to a student's increased risk for school dropout, disengagement and/or truancy, and poor academic outcomes, especially among groups more likely to be disproportionately disciplined (IIRP, 2018; Skiba, 2014; Wood, 2008). Racial and socioeconomic disparities are evident in research and analyses surrounding school discipline practices (Skiba, 2014). Assessments of discipline referrals have found that minor discipline infractions are more likely to be reported for African American and Hispanic students than their Caucasian peers (Skiba, 2011; Steinberg, 2017). These minor infractions were for nonviolent behaviors such as inappropriate language and perceived disrespect (Brown, 2018; Skiba, 2011; Steinberg, 2017).

The numbers of over-represented African American students in discipline referrals continue to increase (Skiba, 2015; Steinberg, 2017); for example, while African American students account for only 15% of all K–12 students in the U.S., African American students account for 35% of U.S. students who have been suspended once, 44% of U.S. students who have been suspended more than once, and 36% of U.S. students who have been expelled from

school (Brown, 2018). After the implementation of zero-tolerance policies in the 1990s, student suspension rates resulted in a 50% increase in the disparity between African American and Caucasian students (Sumner, Silverman, & Frampton, 2010). African American students are three times more likely than Caucasian students to be suspended or expelled, and though representing only 18% of enrollment in preschools, African American children represented 48% of preschool students with more than one out-of-school suspension (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2014). Their Caucasian peers represented 43% of the population but only made up 26% of the student population with more than one out-of-school suspension (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2014). While Caucasian girls are suspended at a rate of only 2%, female students of color are suspended at a rate of 12% (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2014).

These disproportionalities do not only affect students of color, as there are also disproportionalities related to students with disabilities, nonheterosexual students, and male students. Students with disabilities are more likely to be physically restrained or placed in seclusion rooms than their nondisabled peers, despite the fact that students with disabilities approximately comprise only 12% of the student population (Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2011; Skiba, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2014). Nonheterosexual youth are more at-risk of suspension or exclusion than their heterosexual peers (Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2011). While boys only make up 54% of students enrolled in preschool, they account for 79% of children who were suspended once and 82% of children who were suspended more than once (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2014). These stark disproportionalities are one of the primary reasons for the trend in eliminating zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline practices.

Ineffectiveness of exclusionary discipline practices. The ineffectiveness of zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline is another reason for School districts are transitioning away from zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline practices, because they are ineffective in decreasing problem behavior (IIRP, 2018; Kupchik, 2010; TeachPlus, 2018). Research indicates that punitive, exclusionary discipline does not deter problem behaviors and can actually increase the very behaviors a school is attempting to eliminate (Kupchik, 2010). Problem behaviors have actually been shown to intensify following punishment alone (Kline, 2016), and there is even a causal relationship between suspension and increased aggression (Costenbader & Markson, 1998). In addition, students who have been suspended have indicated that the threat of or serving of a suspension has not deterred their behavior; they felt they would be suspended again in the future, and that there was no purpose in the suspension (Costenbader & Markson, 1998).

Zero-tolerance discipline policies were developed as a response to school climate and safety concerns; however they are often counterproductive, as students are often suspended for offenses that are not safety-related (Brown, 2018; Irby, 2015). Defiance and disruption are two of the most common problem behaviors associated with suspension (Losen, Martinez, & Okelola, 2014). U.S. schools often respond to minor infractions as though they are criminal offenses with a variety of punitive measure in place as a response to problem behaviors (Payne & Welch, 2018). While the idea of punishment in schools is not inherently wrong, there is much improvement to be made regarding school discipline and punishment in order to ensure equitable practices for all students (Irby, 2014).

Restorative Justice: A Theoretical Framework

School-based restorative practices implementation has been identified as a research-based alternative to exclusionary school discipline practices. The terms *restorative practices* and *restorative justice* are often used interchangeably; however, there is a difference. Restorative justice is primarily responsive in nature after harm has been caused. Restorative practices include a continuum of approaches to facilitate proactive community building, conflict mediation when appropriate, and reparation when harm has occurred (Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010; Kimball, 2018; Wachtel, 2016).

Origins. Restorative practices are rooted in restorative justice theory (Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010; Kimball, 2013). Restorative justice theory is grounded in a compilation of work by researchers and practitioners who have translated indigenous practices of community-building and response-to-harm to the Westernized world of criminal and community justice (Hashim et al., 2018; Kehoe, Bourke-Taylor, & Broderick, 2017). The philosophical origins of restorative justice theory are found worldwide in aboriginal and indigenous traditions. First Nations have long approached responses to crime and wrongdoing in stark contrast to traditional Westernized punitive responses (Dickenson-Gilmore & La Prairie, 2005). Asian conflict resolution processes are restorative in nature, and the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* is rooted in human connectedness (Brown, 2018). The emphasis placed on relationships within the Lakota culture shapes their ethical practices; the fifth rite of the Lakota people is called *Hunkapi*; this word illustrates the spiritual importance they place on the connection between all living things (Eidt, 2011). Maori beliefs and customs reflect a restorative philosophical approach to create altruistic communities and acknowledge humans' interconnectedness; their processes for conflict resolution focus on reconciliation and community reintegration (Brown, 2018; Chatwin, 1987).

Zehr (2002) described the connections of living beings as a “web of relationships” that is “disrupted” when harm has taken place (Brown, 2018, p. 46). Researchers and restorative practices advocates assert that restorative practices provide a culturally responsive approach to repairing relational harm (Boyes-Watson, 2015; Brown, 2018; Pranis, 2005). This is based upon the inclusive “culture of care” that is created through the use of restorative practices and the voice given to all community members and participants of restorative processes (Cavanaugh et al., 2014, p. 566). The circle shape element of restorative practices physically and representatively balances the power dynamics of circle participants (Boyes-Watson, 2015; Costello et al., 2010; Pranis, 2005); “indigenous people groups have long understood the circle as a space of equality, connectedness, empowerment and dignity” (High, 2017, p. 532). Restorative practices honor human diversity and take a relational approach to equality where all participants are treated with respect and “equal concern” (Llewellyn, Archibald, Clairmont, & Crocker, 2014, p. 298).

Contemporary restorative practices models in Westernized culture began to emerge in the late 1970s with the work of Christie (1977) in Norway who applied the practices to conflict mediation within Norwegian neighborhoods (Dickenson-Gilmore & La Prairie, 2005). Wachtel and other founders of the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP) have also been instrumental in this paradigm shift (IIRP, 2018). Restorative practices advocates reference multiple theoretical foundations in support of the restorative justice theory framework; however, the most-referenced theories to-date focus on human “affect” and the concept of “shame”; these are affect theory and reintegrative shame theory (Alphen, 2015; Brown, 2018; Carter 2013; Costello et al., 2010; Fronius et al., 2016; Zehr, 2002).

Affect theory. One of the foundations of restorative justice theory is affect theory, which identifies that human beings experience healthier relationships when they are free to express emotion or “affect,” their natural, biological responses to events and emotional stimuli (Tomkins, 2008). Human affects are shown through the facial expressions and visceral reactions of a person, and they are arguably an evolutionary factor that has allowed for the non-verbal communication of information between human beings (Tomkins, 2008; Tomkins & McCarter, 1964; Wachtel, 2016). There are nine identified affects that illustrate the intensities and visceral reactions of these affects (see Table 1).

Table 1

Nine Affects of Shame

Affect intensity	Facial/visceral human reaction
Interest-Excitement	eyebrows down, eyes track, look, listen
Enjoyment-Joy	smile, lips widened up and out, smiling eyes (circular wrinkles)
Surprise-Startle	eyebrows up, eyes blink
Shame-Humiliation	eyes down, head down
Distress-Anguish	cry, arched eyebrows, mouth down, tears, rhythmic sobbing
Contempt- Disgust	sneer, upper lip up
Fear-Terror	eyes frozen open, pale, cold, sweaty, facial trembling, with hair erect
Anger-Rage	frown, clenched jaw, eyes narrowed, red face
Dissmell	upper lip raised, head pulled back

Note. This table displays the order of affect intensity and facial/visceral human reactions to each affect (Tomkins, 2008; Wachtel, 2016).

The negative affects include shame-humiliation, distress-anguish, disgust, fear-terror, anger-rage, dissmell, or to “[turn] up one’s nose” (Wachtel, 2016, p. 5). Surprise-startle is considered a neutral affect, and enjoyment-joy and interest-excitement are considered positive affects (Tomkins, 2008). These affects were identified through studies of both children and adults, showing that these visceral reactions are cross-cultural and identifiable between human beings of different backgrounds (Tomkins & McCarter, 1964). From an evolutionary standpoint, this is important, because “affect” is communicated more quickly between human beings than any other form of communication.

The concept of “shame,” which is present as an affect in Tomkins’ (2008) affect theory is of critical importance when analyzing restorative justice. In our modern world, shame and guilt are often used synonymously; however, unique to other research about the concept of shame, Tomkins’ (2008) nine affects are not in alignment with the concept of guilt. Human beings are hardwired to seek positive affects and minimize negative affects (Nathanson, 1992; Tomkins, 2008; Wachtel, 2016), and communication of one’s affect is also believed to be an important component of maintaining positive mental health (Tomkins & McCarter, 1964). The neutral affect of surprise-startle can be viewed as a “reset” button, and the negative affects encompass the varying negative emotions that humans may feel in different situations (Wachtel, 2016). This is of critical importance when understanding and applying affect theory into an understanding of restorative justice because restorative justice is based upon human relations and communication (Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010; Wachtel, 2016).

Shame is an indicator that something negative has occurred that has brought a person’s affect beneath the threshold of the neutral affect of “startle” (Tomkins, 2008). Understanding behavioral responses to feeling shame in the context of “affect theory” and human evolution

gives human beings more effective ways to respond to someone who is feeling “shame” of another negative affect (Nathanson, 1992; Tomkins, 2008). Nathanson (1992) expounded upon Tomkins’ (2008) research to include a visual representation of human responses to shame, called the Compass of Shame (Figure 1).

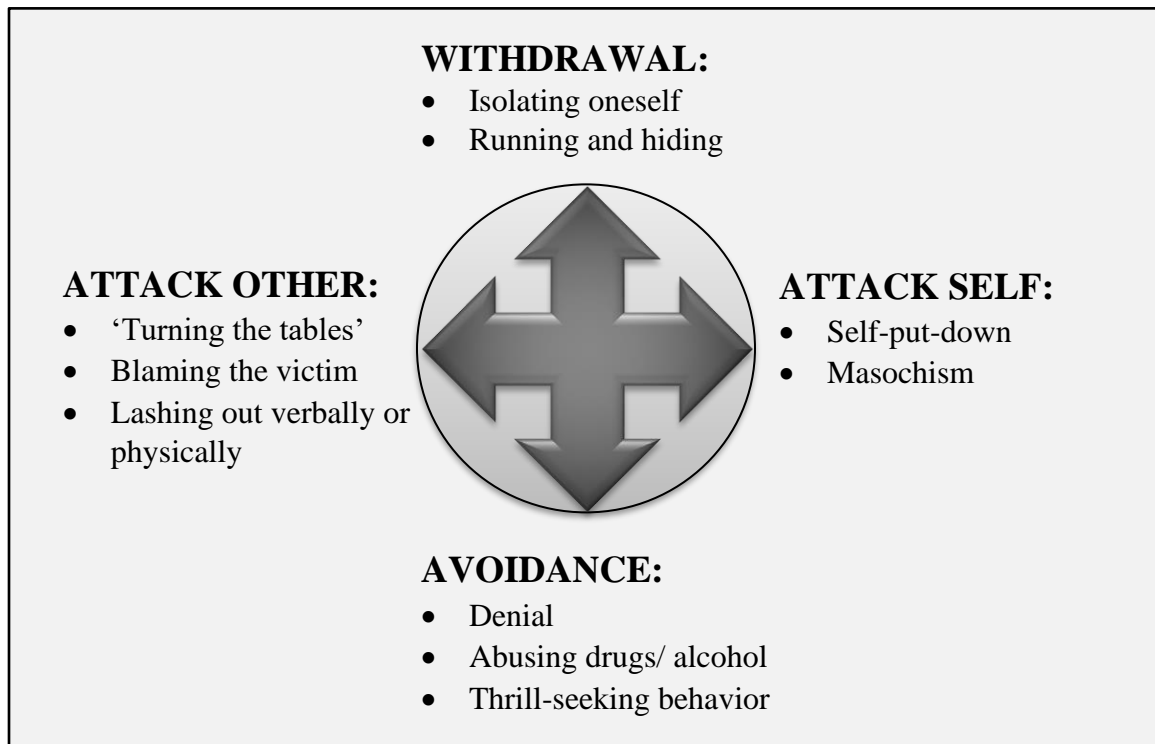


Figure 1. Compass of shame. Adapted from revised model of the Compass of Shame (IIRP, 2018).

When a person is experiencing one of the six negative affects, they respond in one of four ways: (a) withdrawal, (b) attacking self, (c) attacking others, or (d) avoidance (Costello et al., 2010; Nathanson, 1992; Wachtel, 2016). Withdrawal can be seen when people isolate themselves. Attacking self is evident through both emotional and physical self-harm, while attacking others may include lashing out verbally or physically. Avoidance may be evident through substance abuse or denial (Costello et al., 2010; Nathanson, 1992; Wachtel, 2016).

These four human responses to experiencing a negative affect are the behaviors that are often seen by educators when a student has harmed another person or has been harmed.

Wachtel (2016) supported Nathanson's (1992) work and suggested that "the attack other response to shame is responsible for the proliferation of violence in modern life" (p. 6). Thus, addressing these experiences and affects are of critical importance when responding to harm that has been caused.

Usually people who have adequate self-esteem readily move beyond their feelings of shame. Nonetheless we all react to shame, in varying degrees, in the ways described by the Compass. Restorative practices, by their very nature, provide an opportunity for us to express our shame, along with other emotions, and in doing so reduce their intensity. In restorative conferences, for example, people routinely move from negative affects through the neutral affect to positive affects. (Wachtel, 2016, p. 6)

The four human responses illustrated in the Compass of Shame demonstrate the crucial link between shame and behavior. These typical human responses to the negative affects are of critical importance when addressing harm that has been caused (Nathanson, 1992; Tomkins, 2008; Tomkins & McCarter, 1964; Wachtel, 2016).

Reintegrative shame theory. Human beings are hardwired to seek positive affects (Tomkins, 2008; Tomkins & Karon, 1962), and so in schools, children will exhibit behaviors to minimize the negative affect they are experiencing. For example, a child who is yelled at when they exhibit a particular negative affect will learn to avoid showing that affect to avoid verbal aggression (Tomkins & McCarter, 1964). Thus, the manner in which a child responds to correction from an educator may be impacted by how other adults in their life have responded to them in similar emotional situations. Unfortunately, adult responses sometimes compound the

initial conflict at-hand. When a school employee has a better understanding of “shame,” they can more effectively navigate the behavioral issue or conflict.

Reintegrative shame theory was first introduced by Braithwaite (1989a) in his seminal publication *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*, with the intent of shifting the idea of an offender’s shame from *stigmatizing* to *reintegrative*. Stigmatizing shame separates the wrongdoer from their community, while reintegrating shame is inclusive and reconnects the person with their community by developing a better understanding of how their behavior or choice(s) have impacted others (Braithwaite, 1993; Brown, 2018; Wachtel, 2016). Research asserts that the role of “shame” is of critical importance when addressing wrong-doing matters:

Shame takes on its particular coloration from the fact that the person feeling it has done or is about to do something through which he comes into contradiction with people to whom he is bound in one form or another, and with himself, with the sector of his consciousness by which he controls himself. The conflict expressed in shame-fear is not merely a conflict of the individual with prevalent social opinion; the individual's behaviour has brought him into conflict with the part of himself that represents this social opinion. (Elias, 1982, p. 292)

Research shows that separating the wrong from the wrongdoer avoids counter-productive blaming processes and replacing them with processes that allow for learning and growth within the community (Braithwaite, 1989a, 1989b, 1993). The emphasis that a society places on the value of the relationships of people within their community plays a large role in the type of shame that is focused on when wrongdoing has occurred (Braithwaite, 1993). Thus, this alternative philosophical approach to crime and/or wrongdoing offers a solution-focused

viewpoint of utilizing shame to repair and strengthen the relational bonds of an offender and their community (Sherman & Strang, 2007).

Human beings are more responsive to shaming when they have a personal connection or investment in the role they are serving and the implications of potential segregation of that role (Braithwaite, 1993). However, if they are disconnected from that role or their community, shame becomes stigmatizing and ineffective as a manner to change behavior (Braithwaite, 1993). If a person responds to their own shame using one of the four previously identified Compass of Shame responses (Nathanson, 1992), they will likely become even further separated from the people within their community who have been harmed (Braithwaite, 1989a, 1989b, 1993). Conversely, if a person's value in their role is highlighted within the community, then reintegrative shaming can be highly effective in changing behavior (Braithwaite, 1993). This alternative response to wrong-doing teaches a person who has committed harm that they are still a valued member of the community and brings them back from feeling one of the six negative affects, and also prevents them from retreating into the coping mechanisms embedded in the Compass of Shame (Braithwaite, 1993; Nathanson, 1992; Tomkins & Karon, 1962). Reintegrative shame can be used as a tool to teach social responsibility and how our decisions and behaviors impact others and the entire community (Braithwaite, 1989a, 1989b; Sherman & Strang, 2007). Restorative justice is rooted in the concepts of community, relationships, and social responsibility; thus, the foundation of reintegrative shame theory is crucial for the restorative justice theory framework because a restorative approach separates the wrongdoing from the wrongdoer and focuses on making things "right" (Alphen, 2015; Drewery, 2016; Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016).

Restorative justice: Theory to practice. Restorative practices allow for the translation from a macro view of social responsibility to the micro level, transferring abstract theory to everyday practice (Alphen, 2015). This emphasizes the importance of social connection, and that “the notion of ‘restorative’ encompasses more than a set of procedures that happen after a rule infraction” (Gregory et al., 2016, p. 328). As restorative practices implementation has extended beyond the realm of criminal justice settings, the practices have evolved to support the organizations in which they serve. Restorative practices are being implemented in social services entities, public and private education organizations, non-profit organizations, private businesses, and more (Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010; Wachtel, 2016). School-based restorative practices are not limited to addressing issues with students, and they should be seen as a relational approach to support all school stakeholders (Brown, 2018; IIRP, 2018; Vaandering, 2015). Restorative practices have also been shown to have a positive impact on teacher efficacy and school staff members’ perceptions of climate and safety (Vaandering, 2015).

Many social scientists have committed their work to the development of restorative practices as a research-based social science that ties theory to everyday practice and “studies how to build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision-making” (Wachtel, 2016, p. 1). The fundamental hypothesis of restorative practices considers human “affect” as critical for cooperation, collaboration, and problem-solving and is in direct alignment with Braithwaite’s (1989a) reintegrative shame theory, which emphasized the importance of non-stigmatization of offenders after wrongdoing (IIRP, 2018; Wachtel, 2016). The fundamental unifying hypothesis of restorative practices is: “Human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things *with* them, rather than *to* them or *for* them”

(Wachtel, 2016, p. 3). Figure 2 visually depicts this hypothesis as a quadrant diagram called the Social Discipline Window and illustrates four specific domains of control and support (IIRP, 2018).

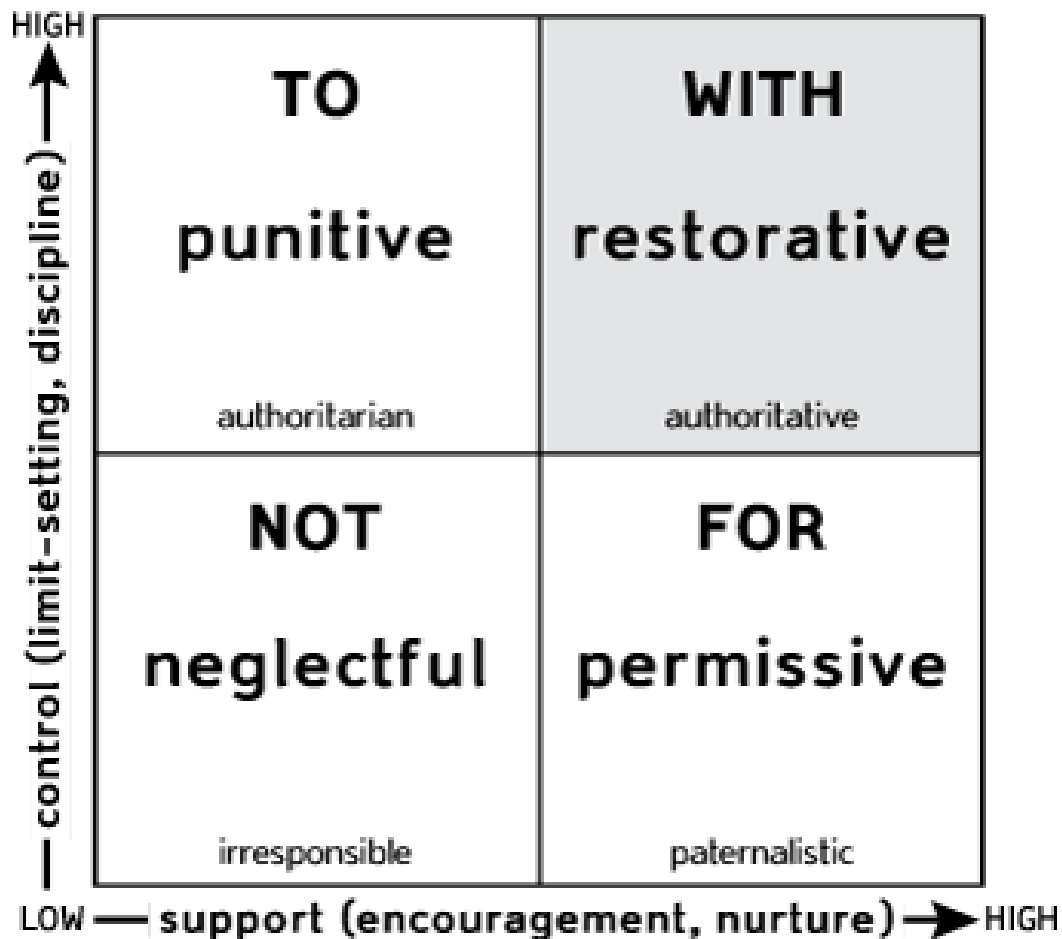


Figure 2. Social discipline window (IIRP, 2018).

The restorative domain encompasses both high control and high support, an authoritative approach to working with others, as opposed to punitive (authoritarian), neglectful (irresponsible), or permissive (paternalistic) attitudes (Costello et al., 2010; IIRP, 2018).

Figure 3 depicts the Restorative Practices Continuum and illustrates a spectrum of informal to formal procedures: (a) affective statements, (b) affective questions, (c) small

impromptu conferences, (d) groups or circles, and (e) formal conferences (Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010; IIRP, 2018).

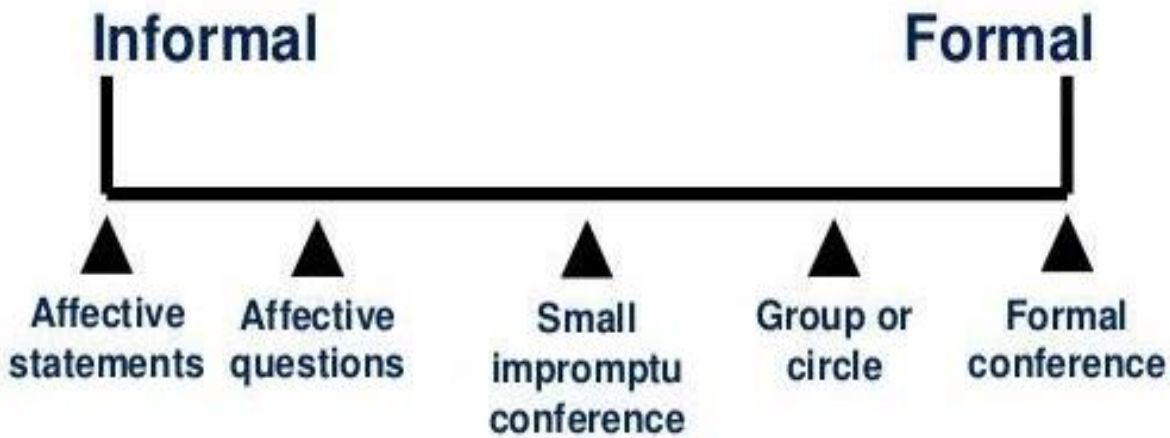


Figure 3. Restorative practices continuum (IIRP, 2018).

This continuum can also be translated into a school's multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), which is visually depicted in Figure 4 as a pyramid of interventions (Brown, 2018; Hashim, Strunk, & Dhaliwal, 2018; Johnson & Weaver, 2013). A strong, integrated MTSS allows for both student and staff engagement and voice, as well as social and emotional learning, personal reflection, and authentic responses to harm (Johnson & Weaver, 2013).

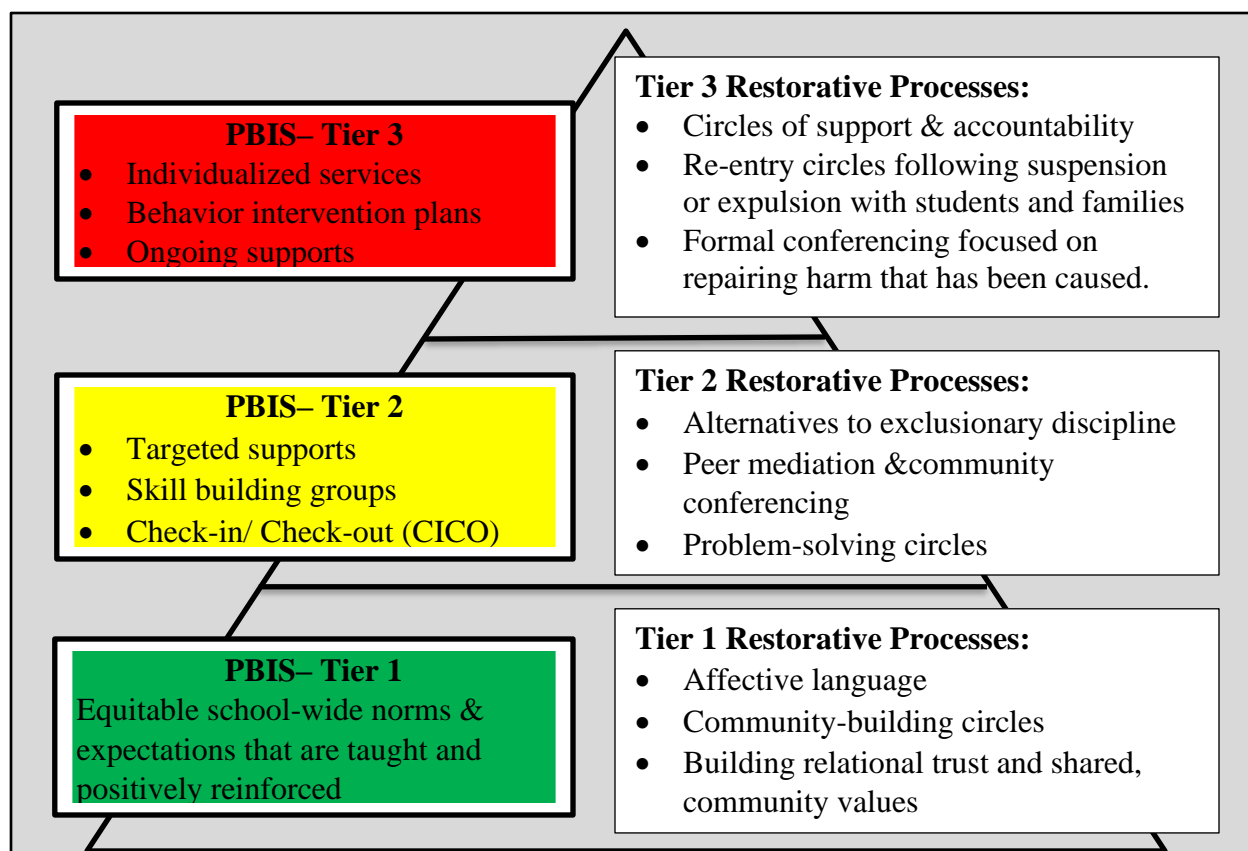


Figure 4. Restorative practices in a multi-tiered system of supports (Johnson & Weaver, 2013).

Affective language. Using affective statements and affective questions are critical to the restorative approach; affective language focuses on community, human affect, and the impact of harm on relationships (Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010; Tomkins & Karon, 1962; Wachtel, 2016). At the very foundation of a tiered approach to restorative practices, affective statements may be used in schools by all stakeholders. Affective statements allow school community members to productively vocalize their emotional responses and reactions to both positive and negative occurrences (Boyes-Watson, 2015; Brown, 2018; Gregory et al., 2016; Pranis, 2005). Research has shown the impact of teacher usage of affective language:

When you tell a student how you feel, you are humanizing yourself to students, who often perceive teachers as distinct from themselves. Some teachers have expressed a

concern that sharing their feelings will make them appear weak to their students or that students will take advantage of them for being vulnerable. We have found just the opposite to be true. When you express your feelings, children become more, not less, empathetic. (Costello et al., p. 13)

Affective questioning includes some variation of the following series of questions: (a) What happened?, (b) What were you thinking when this happened?, (c) What have you thought about since?, (d) Who was affected?, and (e) What needs to happen to make things right? (Boyes-Watson et al., 2015; Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010; Pranis, 2005; Wachtel, 2016). Though they are listed as the most informal practices on the continuum, affective language is foundational to both informal and formal practices (Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010; Gregory et al., 2016; IIRP, 2018; Wachtel, 2016).

Circles. The circle is a universal symbol of equality, fairness, wholeness, and the interconnectedness of human beings. (Clarysse & Moore, 2017; Costello et al., 2010). Community circles create an “ethic of care” and are a central proactive component to school-based restorative practices (Cavanaugh, Virgil, & Garcia, 2014, p. 566). Classroom community circles provide a mechanism for educators to intentionally create and strengthen relationships with and amongst their students and/or colleagues (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015; Brown, 2018; Goldys, 2016). Circle processes create a safe space to share thoughts, emotions, and affects through authentic speaking and active listening using a talking piece and shared norms or expectations (Brown, 2018; Pranis 2005; Wachtel, 2016). This community-building, relational element is critical in building foundational capacity for school-based restorative practices (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015; Brown, 2018). Small, impromptu conferences or circles may be used to build upon and/or maintain the relationships that were built through community-building

processes (Boyes-Watson, 2016; Costello et al., 2010; Johnson & Weaver, 2013). Responsive circles and mediations may be employed in many different situations (Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2016; Pranis, 2005). An educator may hold a large group or classroom circle as a response to harm that has occurred when something happens within a larger group context (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015; Pranis, 2005).

Formal conferencing. When there is a conflict between/amongst people in a school setting, the use of victim/offender dialogue may be utilized to repair the harm that has been caused in an effort to mend the relationship (Boyes-Watson et al., 2015; Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010; Pranis, 2005; Wachtel, 2016). Restorative responses to harm generally follow the afore-mentioned, scripted, affective questions to address the issue at-hand. This allows the focus to be on mending relationships and “righting” wrongs as opposed to placing blame and the negative effects of shame on the person who caused the harm (Braithwaite, 1989a, 1989b, 1993, 2001a, 2001b; Costello et al., 2010; Johnson & Weaver, 2013; Nathanson, 1992; Pranis, 2005). A crucial component of victim/offender dialogues is the “voice” given to the victim of the harm that occurred, an element that is often missed in traditional, retributive justice practices (Brown, 2018; Carter, 2013; Costello et al., 2010; Daniels, 2013; Drewery, 2016; Fox, 2015; Kehoe, Bourke-Taylor, & Broderick, 2017).

Typically, the most formalized restorative process of a school-based, multi-tiered system of supports focuses on the reintegration of a student following a happening that caused more serious harm to another person and/or the greater school community (Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2016; IIRP, 2018; Pranis, 2005; Wachtel, 2016). Formal conferencing requires significant preparation and time to create an intentional, safe space for offender reintegration to the community (Brown, 2018; Costello et al., Crawford, 2015; Pranis, 2005; Wachtel, 2016). Formal

conferencing is rooted in the fundamental premises of reintegrative shame theory. The process seeks to move all participants away from the negative affects of shame, through the neutral affect, and into the positive affects, which allows for a productive and more sustainable reintegration into the school community (Braithwaite, 1989a; Brown, 2018; Nathanson, 1992; Tomkins, 2008; Wachtel, 2016).

Resistance to restorative practices. The deeply-ingrained nature of how Western society views punishment and discipline is the primary factor associated with resistance to restorative justice initiatives (Blood & Thorsborne, 2006). Subsequently, this transition from the traditional punitive model of justice to a restorative, relational model is highly complex in educational settings. The implementation of school-based restorative practices requires a solid foundation that is rooted in a systemic approach to the philosophical grounding of restorative justice (Blood & Thorsborne, 2006; Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010), and school districts that have successfully implemented restorative practices have used practical strategies and methods to move organizational change that include utilizing social capital and restorative strategies themselves (Blood & Thorsborne, 2006; Brown, 2018; Pranis, 2005; Wachtel, 2016). When moving from theory to practice, evidence shows that a school must emphasize the importance of meeting staff where they are at and organically implementing this shift from punitive to restorative culture in both philosophy and in practice using a restorative, relational approach (Beckman et al., 2016; Polizzi, 2010). This illustrates the critical nature of understanding the *essence* of school employees' lived experiences during school-based restorative practices implementation.

Review of Research and Methodological Research

Schools are seeking alternatives to punitive discipline models in an effort to improve school climate and safety (Brown, 2018; IIRP, 2018; TeachPlus, 2018). Restorative practices have become an alternative to exclusionary discipline practices and are at the forefront of conversations surrounding school discipline reform (Disney, 2018; Pranis, 2005; TeachPlus, 2018). Research shows that restorative practices provide opportunities for people to develop critical life skills– increased reflective thinking, empathy, accountability, harmony, stronger and more respectful relationships, and awareness for others (Costello et al., 2010; Disney, 2018; IIRP, 2018; Polizzi, 2011). Restorative practices have also been shown to improve students’ relationships and self-efficacy (Brown, 2018; Kehoe et al., 2017; Pranis, 2005). Preventative, school-wide restorative approaches also support academic gains and increase mental health and well-being (Ingraham et al., 2016).

Higher level outcomes reported in this evaluation are the impact of [restorative approaches] on climate for learning, life skills, emotional literacy, behavior and relationships more broadly, and more specifically the impact on speaking, listening, thinking and conflict resolution. (Bevington, 2015, p. 113)

A restorative approach to community-building and responding to harm has been found to produce positive changes relating to youth empowerment and active community involvement, and these facets lead to an improved school climate (Harden, Kenemore, Mann, Edwards, List, & Martinson, 2014). School-based restorative practices include the use of preventative community-building strategies and responsive strategies to repair relationships that have been harmed (Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010). This approach encourages the development of policies and procedures that are rooted in dignity, community, and respect (Brown, 2018; Darling & Monk, 2018; Vaandering, 2014; Wachtel, 2016). Aligning these values and practices within the school

community is critical in order to remain consistent with a restorative approach to school discipline and improve [perceptions of] school climate and safety (Bevington, 2015).

Restorative approaches are situationally-sensitive and empower all stakeholders (IIRP, 2018). The victim/survivor of a harmful event plays a crucial role that has traditionally been absent in the traditional discipline and judicial processes (Sherman, Strang, Barnes & Woods, 2006). Those harmed have an equal voice at the table in restorative processes, and quantitative research illustrates a positive impact on victim satisfaction of both their experience and the outcome after participating in a restorative process (Strang, 2002). In schools, victim age plays an important role in both articulating and understanding responses to wrongdoing (Costello et al., 2010; IIRP, 2018). Younger children have a more difficult time understanding “harm,” and so their responses depend more on regaining a sense of belonging after exhibiting a problematic or harmful behavior (Vaandering, 2013). A restorative approach allows younger children to explore something that has happened and gives them both the verbiage and tools to navigate conflict appropriately (Vaandering, 2013).

As previously discussed, research illustrates the glaring disparities of zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline practices (Boyes-Watson et al., 2015; Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010; Disney, 2018; Fronius et al., 2016; Polizzi, 2011; Pranis, 2005; Wachtel, 2016). Early research illustrates that the use of restorative practices in schools reduces multiple disparities in school discipline data. This can be seen globally, and it includes racial disparities, gender disparities, and disabled versus their nondisabled peers (Albrecht, 2010; Brown, 2018; Ingraham et al., 2016; Kimball, 2013; Kline, 2016; Mansfield, Fowler, & Rainbolt, 2018).

There has also been success in reducing punitive responses to harm and the recidivism of individuals who commit crimes or exhibit problem behaviors in school (Brown, 2018; Goldys,

2016; IIRP, 2018; Sumner, Silverman, & Frampton, 2010). A quantitative research study of a middle school in California reported an 87% reduction in suspensions and also zero expulsions following their implementation of restorative practices (Sumner, Silverman, & Frampton, 2010). A school district in Georgia measured the implementation of a three-tiered restorative practices model in an effort to reduce the school-to-prison pipeline with “impressive” results; schools’ juvenile court referrals were decreased by 67.4% and student detentions for problem behaviors decreased by 8% (Ruiz, 2017, p. 824). After school-wide implementation at a high school in Colorado, suspensions decreased by 39%, expulsions decreased by 82%, and the school’s juvenile court referrals were decreased by 15% (Ruiz, 2017, p. 829). These quantitative studies clearly illustrate that restorative practices can lead to a reduction in the use of punitive discipline practices, which is one of the primary reasons that schools choose to implement restorative practices (Brown, 2018; IIRP, 2018; Wachtel, 2016).

Student aggression is an unsafe behavior that often results in the use of exclusionary discipline practices; zero-tolerance policies are often applied when an aggressive act or incident occurs. Aggressive or unsafe actions require a response that addresses the safety concerns presented by the act that occurred. Typically, the student who caused the harm or safety concern is removed from the setting (Brown, 2018; IIRP, 2018; TeachPlus, 2018). Eliminating exclusionary discipline practices can create safety concerns without using a research-based alternative approach to respond to aggressive acts (TeachPlus, 2018). Multiple studies surrounding school-based restorative practices show promise in reducing aggressive acts, and restorative practices have been shown to reduce recidivism of these behaviors that are school safety concerns (Bonell et al., 2014; Fox, 2015; Goldys, 2016; Sherman et al., 2006). This

supports the use of restorative practices to improve school climate and safety while also reducing the use of a punitive discipline model.

Review of Methodological Issues

A considerable amount of research exists surrounding restorative justice in both theory and application (Fronius et al., 2016). The two primary issues illustrating a gap in the research surrounding school-based restorative practices are methodology and target population. The research is overwhelmingly shown through a synthesis of quantitative methodological studies that focus on the reduction of behavior referrals, exclusionary discipline practices, and disparities in school discipline data. Researchers caution against using only referral and suspension data for data collection, as processes and coding of referrals and suspensions may differ based upon institutional policies (Karp & Sacks, 2014). Though ample research indicates considerable promise for positive outcomes of school-based restorative practices, researchers have acknowledged the importance of future researchers seeking out qualitative data from school stakeholders to create a more holistic body of research surrounding restorative practices implementation in schools (Brown, 2018; Ruiz, 2017; Sumner et al., 2010).

Qualitative studies surrounding school-based restorative practices are limited in comparison to the substantial number of quantitative analyses in support of using a restorative approach (Brown, 2018; Fronius et al., 2016; Polizzi, 2011;). This has created an absence of rich descriptions of school stakeholders' experiences during the implementation of restorative practices. Clarysse (2017) suggested that "future research could contextualize [restorative practices implementation] findings by including personal in-depth interviews with stakeholders and expanding restorative practices and PBP [peace-building practices] materials specifically for school leadership that are relevant to the live school community" (p. 133). More specifically, and

based upon the critical component of “staff buy-in,” descriptions of school employees’ lived experiences during restorative practices implementation would prove helpful in strategic planning by school leaders.

Qualitative and mixed methods studies surrounding restorative justice have generally included cross-sections of stakeholder groups as study participants, which have included victims, offenders, circle keepers, and facilitators (Brown, 2018; Dedinsky, 2012; Disney, 2018; Fronius et al., 2016; Polizzi, 2011). School-based restorative practices studies rarely focus solely on school employees’ lived experiences, though one found hermeneutic phenomenological study sought to determine how teachers adopt a restorative justice mindset, and it used high school teachers in Southern California as study participants (Loomer, 2017). The body of research surrounding restorative practices in U.S. schools is substantially limited geographically based upon the fledgling pockets of schools and communities who have been exposed to and educated about restorative practices. There is a general absence of data in the rural U.S., and the majority of studies within the United States are found in more urban areas, such as California, Colorado, Florida, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Illinois, and Minnesota (Bevington, 2015; Bonnell et al., 2014; Brown, 2018; Daniels, 2013; Gillard, 2014). Thus, future studies would benefit from utilizing target populations that include samplings from rural areas and states.

Synthesis of Research Findings

Restorative practices embody aboriginal and indigenous traditions that focus on community-centered values, inclusiveness, and reconciliation. The restorative justice theoretical framework is directly supported by affect theory and reintegrative shame theory (Braithwaite, 1989a; IIRP, 2018; Tomkins, 2008; Tomkins & Karon, 1962; Wachtel, 2016). Nathanson’s (1992) *Compass of Shame* expounds upon Tomkins’ (2008) affect theory and Braithwaite’s

(1989a) reintegrative shame theory. These theories, along with indigenous tradition, have given birth to the social science known as restorative practices (Costello et al., 2010; Eiht, 2011; IIRP, 2018; Wachtel, 2016).

Behavior occurs in a societal context, and human beings have evolved over time to communicate through affect, which transcends verbal language (IIRP, 2018; Tomkins, 2008; Tomkins & McCarter, 1964; Wachtel, 2016). When a person is experiencing negative affects, it impacts their well-being and ability to connect with others within their community. Restorative practices emphasize the importance of addressing shame from a reintegrative lens as opposed to a stigmatizing lens (Braithwaite, 1989a, 1989b, 1993, 2001b; Brown, 2018; IIRP, 2018; Wachtel, 2016). A person who feels stigmatizing shame after committing an initial offense is likely to reoffend if they continue to feel disconnected from the whole; this may occur through avoidance, attacking self or others, and/or withdrawing from others (Nathanson, 1992). Conversely, reintegrative shame can be a highly effective way to support someone in changing their behavior, because restorative processes allow for accountability and healing of the relationships within the community that have been harmed (Braithwaite, 1989a, 1989b; Costello et al., 2010). In schools, specifically, this reintegrative lens is more effective in reducing problem behaviors and recidivism because it emphasizes the importance of relationships between all school stakeholders (Brown, 2018; Goldys, 2016; IIRP, 2018; Wachtel, 2016).

School safety, climate, and culture are typically associated with student behavior; more specifically, rates of office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions (Brown, 2018; TeachPlus, 2018). Zero-tolerance discipline policies were developed as a response to school climate and safety concerns; however they are often counterproductive, as students are often suspended for offenses that are not safety-related (Brown, 2018; Irby, 2015). Research has shown that zero-

tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline practices are not an effective way to change student behavior. Further, quantitative studies has repeatedly shown that students of color, boys, students with disabilities, and nonheterosexual students are disproportionately impacted by the exclusionary discipline practices associated with zero-tolerance policies (Skiba, 2011; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014).

The ineffectiveness of these practices and policies, as well as the disproportionalities have prompted districts throughout the United States to eliminate zero-tolerance policies and the use of exclusionary discipline (Brown, 2018; TeachPlus, 2018). However, some districts have eliminated these practices and policies without a research-based alternative to support the school community in changing problem behaviors and maintaining a safe and orderly environment (TeachPlus, 2018). School employees typically perceive school safety, culture, and climate as lower when exclusionary practices are eliminated without a research-based alternative securely in place (TeachPlus, 2018). Restorative practices are an alternative approach that many districts throughout the U.S. are employing to reduce exclusionary discipline and reduce disparities in school discipline data (Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010; Wachtel, 2016). Experts maintain that staff buy-in is a critical foundational component for successful and sustainable implementation of restorative practices within the school setting (Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010; Fronius et al., 2016).

Critique of Previous Research

The primary focus of the research surrounding restorative practices has been on reducing the rates of referrals, suspensions, and expulsions, as well as the disparities surrounding the use of exclusionary discipline practices. Multiple quantitative studies have illustrated an overall decrease in behavior referrals and exclusionary discipline practices following the implementation

of restorative practices in schools (Boyes-Watson et al., 2015; Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010; Fronius et al., 2016; Pranis, 2005; Wachtel, 2016). This focus has built the case for restorative practices implementation in school settings and has supported school districts' initiatives to replace exclusionary discipline practices with restorative practices as a response to problem behavior.

Despite a large amount of quantitative studies surrounding the potential outcomes of restorative practices implementation, there are far fewer qualitative studies available (Fronius et al., 2016). The researcher was not surprised that the methodology has largely been quantitative, as the primary emphasis has been on studying whether restorative practices implementation can reduce office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions in schools. Additional quantitative studies have focused on satisfaction levels of people who have participated in restorative circles and conferencing. There have been far fewer qualitative studies, and many of these were found to use case study methodology as the design approach. Thus, the researcher identified a need for further descriptive analyses of the *lived experiences* of people who have experienced the phenomenon of school-based restorative practices implementation. There are limited phenomenological studies surrounding restorative practices in schools, and they primarily seek to find meaning in study participants' responses using a hermeneutical approach.

Target populations in restorative practices research typically includes mixed samplings of school stakeholder groups, including students, school employees, families, and community members (Fronius et al., 2016). The experiences of a study participants were generally focused on the person's role as someone who had experienced a restorative circle or conference. These studies did not focus solely on school staff members as study participants with the emphasis on implementation itself. The researcher noted this absence of research, because "staff buy-in" has

repeatedly be identified as a critical component in restorative practices implementation (Denver School-Based Restorative Practices Partnership, 2017). Further, there is not a body of research, quantitative or qualitative, that focuses on the use of restorative practices in primarily rural states within the United States.

Summary of Chapter 2

In this chapter the researcher completed an extensive review of the literature surrounding restorative justice, and more specifically, restorative practices within school settings. Restorative justice as a theoretical framework encompasses the origins of restorative justice, Tomkins's (2008) affect theory, and Braithwaite's (1989a) reintegrative shame theory. The literature clearly indicates that nascent restorative practices research shows promising results in decreasing the use of exclusionary discipline practices and reducing the disproportionalities that are tied to these practices. The researcher identified a large body of quantitative evidence to support the use of restorative practices in schools. However, despite the critical implementation component of staff buy-in, there is a lack of descriptive analyses of school employees' lived experiences during restorative practices implementation. In Chapter 3, the researcher will detail the methodological design used to answer the research question, as well as the study's research population and sampling method, and the data collection and analysis procedures.

Chapter 3: Methodology

“Staff buy-in” is a critical component for school-based restorative practices implementation (Blood & Thorsborne, 2006; Denver School-Based Restorative Practices Partnership, 2017; IIRP, 2018); thus, there is a need for qualitative inquiry into the lived experiences of school employees during restorative practices implementation. Understanding the essence of school employees’ lived experiences will create a more robust body of restorative practices research to aid in school leaders’ strategic planning of implementation. In this study, in-depth interviews and analyses were conducted to create information-rich descriptions of school employees’ lived experiences during the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation.

Research Question

What are the lived experiences of school employees during the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation?

Purpose and Design of the Study

Rationale for a qualitative study design. Qualitative research methods are often concerned with garnering an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon or are focused on *meaning* (and *heterogeneities in meaning*)—which are often centered on the *how* and *why* of a particular issue, process, situation, subculture, scene or set of social interactions (Drowkin, 2012). There was an identified need to better understand the lived experiences of school employees to gain more insight into the phenomenon of school-based restorative practices implementation. A more descriptive understanding of what school employees might experience during this phenomenon will aid in strategic planning efforts. Further, school employees might identify ways they can provide ongoing support to one another during implementation.

Phenomenological methodological approach. This study seeks to develop rich descriptions of the lived experiences of participants. The researcher chose a phenomenological methodological design approach to answer the research question, because phenomenology explicitly addresses research questions that are focused on examining the lived experiences of study participants (Lavertys, 2003; Moerer-Urdall & Creswell, 2004). Case study methodology was considered, but ultimately rejected, because the purpose of this study was to specifically study the lived experiences of people rather than drawing conclusions from the collected data.

Phenomenology attempts to make sense of a particular phenomenon based upon the lived experiences of the study participants. Transcendental phenomenology was fathered by Husserl, a mathematician-turned-philosopher who pioneered phenomenological methodology as a qualitative research approach. He strived to gain a better understanding of the subjective experiences of human beings through a transcendental philosophical approach (Lavertys, 2003). “Meaning is the core of transcendental phenomenology of science, a design for acquiring and collecting data that explicates the essences of human experience” (Moerer-Urdall & Creswell, 2004, para. 1). Heidegger was a student of Husserl’s who began his studies in theology and shifted towards science. However, over time, Heidegger’s philosophical approach began to differ from Husserl’s, as “hermeneutics requires reflective interpretation of a text or a study in history to achieve a meaningful understanding” (Moerer-Urdall & Creswell, 2004, para. 1), not merely the descriptive essence of the experience or phenomenon. The use of hermeneutical phenomenology as the primary philosophical approach was not appropriate for this study. This decision was made based upon this philosophical difference in the theoretical frameworks developed by Husserl—which was expounded upon by Moustakas (1994)—and Heidegger—which was expounded upon by van Manen (1990). This study sought to provide rich descriptions

of study participants' lived experiences; however, the researcher did not seek to find specific meaning to answer a hypothesis.

Phenomenological study has been identified by multiple researchers as a reliable and credible approach to qualitative research (Creswell, 1998; Creswell et al., 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Morse, 1994). Though this study was not looking to develop theory itself about school-based restorative practices implementation, the study included the “[creation of] categories from the data and [analyzation of] the relationships between categories while attending to how the lived experience of research participants can be understood” (Dworkin, 2012). This was accomplished through analyses of middle school employees' descriptions of their own lived experiences and the influences they identified as impacting those experiences. As previously discussed, the primary aim of this research study was to gain a deeper understanding of the *essence* of the lived experiences of school staff during the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation; thus, Husserl's transcendental approach to phenomenology was the appropriate philosophical approach to this study.

Research Population and Sampling Method

The general population for this study was a group of six Iowa middle school employees that had experienced the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation. A larger population, such as those used in quantitative studies, was not necessary to draw in-depth understanding of phenomena or the meaning associated with phenomena and lived experience (Creswell, 1998; Morse, 1994). The experiences of six staff members from one Iowa middle school were explored through a two-tiered, in-depth interview process. A sample size of six staff

members provided information-rich data collection for in-depth analysis of school employees' lived experiences (Creswell, 1998; Morse, 1994).

Middle school study site. The Iowa middle school that was used as the study site had implemented school-based restorative practices for two consecutive years (2016–17; 2017–18). The chosen middle school site resides in an urban area in a primarily rural, homogenous state. The U.S. Census Bureau (2018) estimated in 2017 that 60.7% of the state's population was Caucasian. Hispanic or Latino/Latina residents comprise 18.1% of the state's population, and 13.4% of Iowans are African American. The percentage of Caucasian students in the school district where this middle school resides are comparable to the state's population. There are lower numbers of Hispanic or Latino/Latina residents but more African American residents. Families within this school district self-select the ethnicity coded in the demographics data. Ethnicity categories listed are the named categories in the district's data system (see Table 2).

Table 2

2017–2018 Student Demographics by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	District	School
Asian	3.03%	2.4%
Black	23.80%	36.38%
Hispanic	4.90%	2.61%
Indian	0.60%	1.31%
White	67.40%	57.30%

Note. This table depicts the study site's student demographics by ethnicity.

The student demographics of the middle school itself are more diverse than the school district as a whole. There are higher percentages of students of color, students being served in special

education, students served through Section 504 plans, and students receiving free or reduced lunch (see Table 3).

Table 3

2017–2018 Student Diversity Factors

Category	District	School
Students of color	32.63%	42.70%
Students served by special education services	11.69%	16.99%
Students served by a Section 504 plan	3.07%	3.27%
Students on free/reduced lunch	48.00%	55.00%

Note. This table displays the factors illustrating the study site’s student diversity factors.

Target population and purposeful sampling. Six middle school staff members were selected through purposeful sampling of volunteer participants (Creswell, 1998; Guetterman, 2015; Mason, 2010; Morse, 1994). Proponents of school-based restorative practices emphasize the importance of all school employees being an integral part of implementation processes. For this reason, the opportunity to participate in this study was extended to all school employees at the study site (see Appendix G). This included both certified staff members (administrators, school counselors, classroom teachers) and classified staff members (paraprofessionals, custodians, and food and nutrition staff). A school administrator was contacted by email to present the study opportunity to school staff members (see Appendix F), and an email template was provided to share with their staff (see Appendix G). Availability and an openness to participate aid in “[a participant’s ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner” (Palinkas et al., 2016). Based upon responses to the building principal, the generated list of interested, voluntary participants were narrowed down by only one specific criterion: middle school staff members must have participated in the two initial implementation years (2016–17 and 2017–18). Participants who have met or exceeded a criterion possess information-rich experiential knowledge (Palinkas et al., 2016). Additional criteria were

not necessary for this purposeful sampling, and the list of respondents was ordered chronologically by the date and time of the response receipt.

Instrumentation and Data Sources

Interview tool development. This study’s interview tool included both the script for the interviewer and the interview questions (see Appendices B, C, & D). The semistructured interview tool utilized both open-ended and probing questions that were constructed using contextualization and “apprehending the phenomenon,” the first two components of Bevan’s (2014) phenomenological interview method (p. 139). Example questions using this interview structure are depicted in Table 4.

Table 4

Interview Structure

Interview structure	Method	Example question
Contextualization	Descriptive/ Narrative Context Questions	“Tell me about restorative practices . . .,” or “Tell me about how restorative practices . . .”
Apprehending the Phenomenon	Descriptive and Structural Questions of Modes of Appearing	“Tell me about your typical community circle . . .,” or “Tell me what you do to get ready for a community circle . . .”

Note. This table depicts the study’s interview structure (Bevans, 2014, p. 139).

This study did not intend to derive additional meaning from these lived experiences; therefore, an additional portion of Bevans’s (2014) method, which serves to develop meaning by clarifying the phenomenon, was not applicable to this study. A first draft of the interview tool underwent an adapted model of the Castillo-Montoya’s (2016) Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) Framework to enhance the reliability and replication of the primary study instrument.

Applying the Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) Framework. The primary aim to the creation of the study's interview questions was to give voice to the *essence* of the lived experiences of school employees during the first two years of restorative practices implementation. To enhance the aim of this research, the study followed a three-phase process to refining the interview protocol. Following the first three phases of Castillo-Montoya's (2016) Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) Framework, this study's IPR Framework: (a) ensured that the interview questions align with the study's research questions, (b) ensured the construction of an inquiry-based conversation format, and (c) ensured the reception of feedback on the interview script, tool, and protocol. Due to time constraints, this study did not include the fourth phase of the Castillo-Montoya (2016) IPR Framework which calls for the piloting of the interview protocol.

The first draft of the interview tool was refined through Phases 1 and 2 of this study's IPR Framework. In Phase 1, a matrix was created to ensure the alignment of the interview instrument's questions with the research questions of this study. This matrix mapped out the bank of interview questions with this study's research question and assisted in identifying the most critical interview questions. This process identified any question gaps that existed or indicated the presence of an oversaturated question area. Results from the Phase 1 Matrix determined whether there need to be any additional questions to fill in gaps or the elimination of questions that were redundant or oversaturated.

During Phase 2 of the applied IPR Framework, a four-pronged question layout was created that followed societal rules and expectations that apply to ordinary conversation. The interview included four types of questions to frame the conversation into introductory, transitional, critical, and closing questions. Introductory and closing questions were

predetermined and standardized amongst all participants (see Appendix D). Transitional and critical interview questions were developed to ascertain robust descriptions and to avoid one-word or short responses, and interviews. Appropriate and timely utilization of transitional and critical questions occurred based upon participant responses during their in-person interviews, and this middle interview portion was the most clearly connected to the study's intended purpose. An in-person interview required the explicit delivery of transitional and critical questions (see Appendix D; Bevan, 2014; Englander, 2012).

It is important to note that the transitional and critical questions in the script of the second interviews were more personalized in an effort to probe for additional descriptions of each school employees' lived experiences during restorative practices implementation (see Appendix E). Each participant's probing questions were chosen from the list of transitional and critical questions from the in-person interview script, and they were chosen based upon the responses elicited in each participant's first, in-person interview. However, these were not chosen until after the completion of the phenomenological reduction of the data collected from the first set of interviews, which are more fully detailed in the Data Analysis Procedures section of this chapter.

Phase 3 of the protocol ensured the reception of feedback about this study's protocol and instrumentation through both a self-reflective researcher component and through structured written feedback from peers/colleagues. The interview script and protocol underwent a self-evaluative think-aloud activity process that identified the presence of specific interview and interview question attributes and feedback for improvement. The interview script and protocol received written peer/colleague feedback utilizing the same evaluation format.

Interview logistics. Research participants' time constraints as public school employees were taken into consideration to encourage participation based upon a minimal time commitment

to this study. This study used a combination of one in-person (face-to-face) interview per participant and was followed by a subsequent telephone interview of each participant. There was a maximum, combined time commitment of 105 minutes. Participants were contacted within one calendar month of receipt of their response to schedule the first interview. Participants received written email notice of their rights as participants and the in-person interview logistics (see Appendix H). Participants did not at any time have a list of the interview questions that were utilized. Each in-person interview lasted between 45–60 minutes in length. Interviews were not conducted in a specific order of participants and were based upon participant availability and convenience. Each voluntary participant was able to choose the most convenient location and time outside of contracted school hours for the interview, so that they felt that they were in a comfortable place to be honest and authentic in their responses.

The second interviews were conducted within one month of the completion of phenomenological reduction of the data collected from the first set of interviews. Following the scheduling of this telephone interview, the researcher sent each participant a written email notice of their rights as participants and the telephone interview logistics (see Appendix H). Participants did not at any time have a list of the interview questions that were utilized in the second interview. Each telephone interview lasted between 30–45 minutes and aimed to elicit responses that provided detailed responses of participants' experiences (Giorgi, 1997).

Data Collection

In this phenomenological study, each participant was interviewed twice to build a more detailed and descriptive picture of the *essence* of school employees' lived experiences. To probe for additional meaning, language and verbiage that were familiar to the participants and in context of the premise of the interview were used throughout study interviews (Benner, 1994).

The interview process was “inductive and emergent in its process” (Dworkin, 2012). The researcher used a combination of one in-person interview and one telephone interview and then compiled the data sources.

In-person interviews. This two-tiered approach to the interview process focused first on the generalist approach to collecting descriptions of experiences from participants (Giorgi, 1997). In-person interviews were conducted with each study participant. These were held with the explicit permission of interviewees to audio record and create interview transcriptions. Each interview was saved in their own unique electronic file using the name “interview” the participant’s number, and the date of the interview; for example:

“Interview_Participant1_28Nov2018”. Interview transcriptions occurred within one week of each in-person interview to begin data analysis. Each audio file was transcribed by hand, and then was reviewed twice for accuracy before each study participant had the opportunity to view the transcription for accuracy of their recorded experiences. Any necessary additions or changes were noted in the transcriptions. Each transcription was saved as its own file and titled using the name “transcription” their participation number, and the date of the transcription; for example:

“Transcription_Participant1_12Dec2018.” The questions developed for each participant’s second interview were dependent upon the participant’s in-person interview transcription and the initial analysis of the participant’s interview data. More detailed information about this phenomenological reduction step is provided in the Data Analysis Procedures section of this chapter. The identified clusters of core themes from each participant’s responses in the first interviews guided the selection of the transitional and critical probing questions that were used in their second interview (see Appendices D and E).

Telephone interviews. Within this data collection model, the purpose of the second interview was to gain deeper insight into each study participant's lived experiences by using individualized transitional and critical probing questions to provide deeper insight into the emergent themes of each participant's lived experiences (see Appendix E). These second interviews aimed to potentially elicit additional detail after the participant had been given time to reflect on the first interview or experiences they may have remembered since then. Information from these interviews was collected through basic note-taking strategies. High-quality, accurate, and descriptive interview notes were attained through active listening and the use of standardized introductory and conclusion questions with the individualized transitional and critical probing questions that were outlined in a matrix (see Appendices D and E). These files were titled using the name "matrix" the participant's number, and the date of the phone interview; for example: "Matrix_Participant1_22Dec2018."

Data compilation. The matrix notes from the second interviews were compiled with the transcriptions from the first interviews. These were titled using the name "compilation," the participant's number, and the day's date; for example: "Compilation_Participant1_25Dec2018." Each participant's full set of interview transcriptions and notes were submitted to them to check for accuracy of their experiences. Any changes, additions, or subtractions of the transcript compilation were noted through the use of strikethroughs and varied font color. This final product was used for this study's data analysis. It is important to note that at no time during the participant data checks did a participant request to edit or omit any data collected from either interview during the interview processes.

Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher modeled their data analysis process from the eight-step data analysis framework created by Yüksel and Yildirim (2015). Based upon the work of Moustakas (1994), the referenced framework accounted for epoché, phenomenological reduction, imagination variation, and *essence* and are visually depicted in Figure 5. Yüksel and Yildirim's (2015) framework included eight distinct steps: (a) Horizontalizing, (b) Reduction of experiences to invariant constituents, (c) Thematic clustering to create core themes, (d) Validating invariant constituents, (e) Constructing individual textural descriptions, (f) Constructing individual structural descriptions, (g) Constructing composite structural descriptions, and (h) Synthesizing the texture and structure into expression.

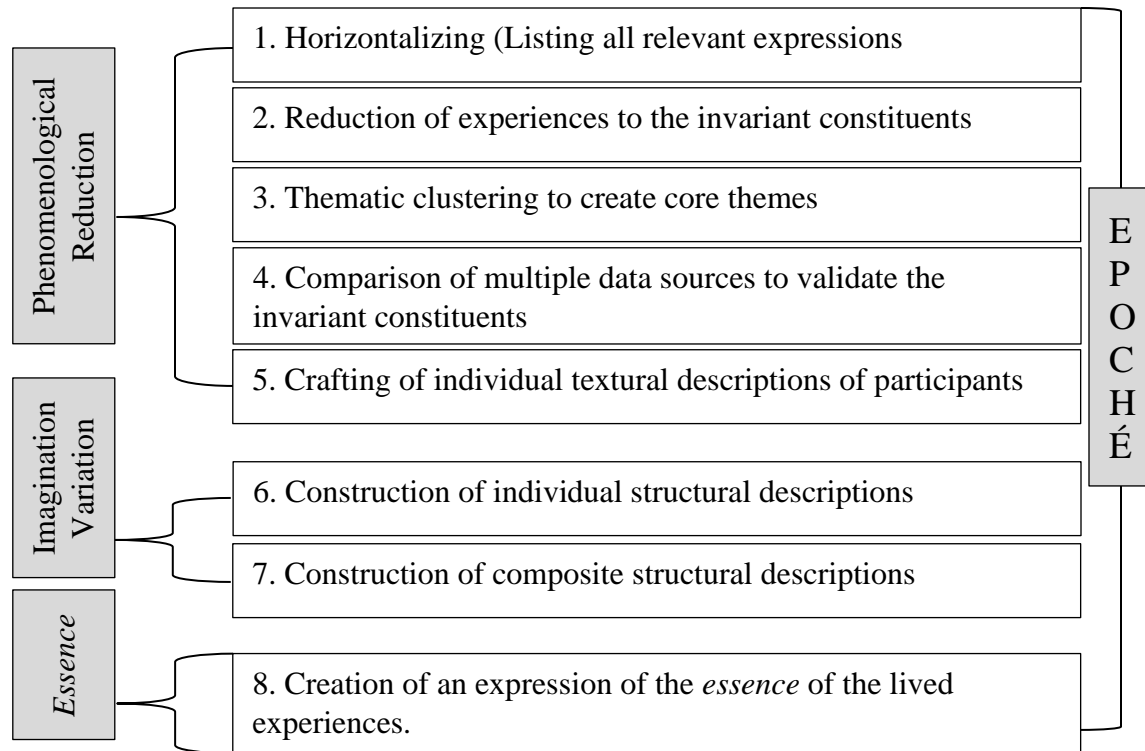


Figure 5. Data analysis step-by-step (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015).

Epoché. The practice of bracketing was a foundational component of this transcendental phenomenological research study throughout the entire step-by-step data analysis process. Modeled after the practice of Yüksel and Yildirim (2015), the researcher constructed a subjectivity statement, which included their own description of their experience with the phenomena; the statement can be found in the Epoché section of Chapter 4. This subjectivity statement was re-visited often in an effort to eliminate the potential for researcher bias based upon the researcher's own prior experiences and presuppositions surrounding the phenomena of school-based restorative practices implementation.

Phenomenological reduction. Modeled after Yüksel and Yildirim (2015), the phenomenological reduction of this study's data occurred through five steps: (a) horizontalizing, (b) the reduction of experiences, (c) the thematic clustering of core themes, (d) the validation of invariant constituents, and (e) the creation of individual textural descriptions. Horizontalizing

was the method used to initially clean up the transcription data from the six initial interviews by listing all expressions. All statements in a participant's transcript held equal value, and there was not a limit to the number of "horizons" created in this step (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher reduced the experiences of invariant constituents by eliminating statements that overlapped or were not relevant to school employees' experiences during school-based restorative practices implementation. Then, the researcher thematically clustered the horizons into the core themes of a participant's lived experience (Moustakas, 1994; Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015).

As previously noted, this current study utilized an *adapted* model of the Yüksel and Yildirim (2015) data analysis framework. A visual representation of the model is depicted in Figure 6. A critical adaptation in this study's model is that it includes two rounds of the first three steps of Yüksel and Yildirim (2015)'s phenomenological reduction process.

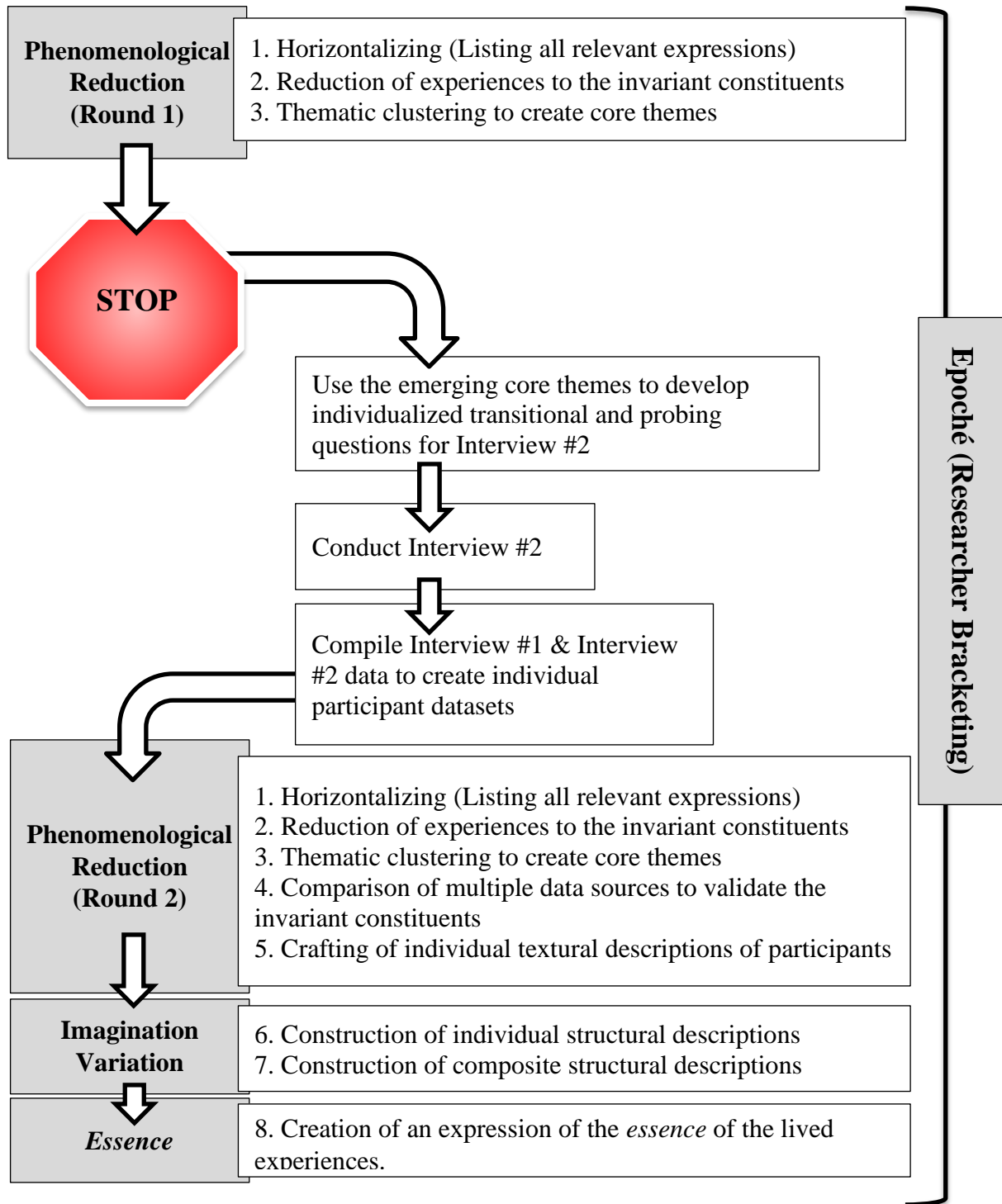


Figure 6. Adapted data analysis framework (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015).

This adapted model completed the first three phenomenological reduction steps after the first interview, and then the researcher stopped analyzing the data to use the emerging core themes of each participant's experience to construct the individualized transitional and critical probing questions to be used in the participant's second interview. Following the completion of each participant's second interview the researcher completed a second round of steps 1–3 of the phenomenological reduction process using horizons created through the data collected in both interviews. The core themes of participants' lived experiences were clustered through a process of repeatedly coding and re-coding the data through font differences in color (Saldaña, 2015).

The fourth step in this study's data analysis included the validation of invariant constituents multiple data sources—interview transcripts, researcher notes, coding documents and charts, and voluntary demographics questionnaire data. This validation of invariant constituents ensured an accurate representation across data sources (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). Researcher and study participant checks assured the validity and reliability of the data that was collected through the two-tiered interview process. The fifth and final step of the phenomenological reduction was the creation of individual textural descriptions. Through the organization of literal excerpts, these textural descriptions explain participants' perceptions of the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). Each participant's textural description was organized based upon the core themes of their lived experience.

Imagination variation. In the sixth step of the data analysis, the researcher used the practice of imagination variation to develop individual structural descriptions of study participants' lived experiences. Through imagination variation, the researcher bracketed their own experiences and imagined how the lived experience occurred for study participants and

created the structures to describe their lived experiences (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). Individual structural descriptions were created for each study participant based upon the development of a structure to organize the textural descriptions. A synthesis of the individual structural descriptions was used to develop composite structural descriptions of the emergent core themes of the lived experience.

Essence. In the eighth and final step of this study's data analyses, the researcher synthesized the individual structural descriptions, the composite structural descriptions, and verbatim interview excerpts into an expression of the *essence* of middle school employees' lived experiences. This expression answered this study's research question by describing study participants' lived experiences during the first two years of restorative practices implementation. The commonalities between the participants' experiences were explored through a format that expressed the emergent core themes of the lived experience using excerpts from individual structural descriptions and verbatim excerpts from participants' interviews.

Limitations of the Research Design

The researcher created a manageable structure to study the research question. The research question was addressed using the data collected through a two-tiered interview process of a purposeful sampling of six middle school employees at one middle school site. The interview script, questions and protocol underwent an Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) Framework, and the phenomenological reduction process methodically guided the selection of the transitional and critical probing questions posed in the second interviews. Data analysis began with the creation of a Researcher Subjectivity Statement to practice researcher bracketing (Kempner, 2013). A prescriptive, step-by-step approach was employed in an effort to more consistently analyze the data across each participant's interview transcription and researcher

notes, so as to avoid any variations or inconsistencies between data sources (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015).

All of the employees at one middle school site were invited to participate, including certified staff members (administrators, counselors, classroom teachers) and classified staff members (paraprofessionals, custodial staff, and food and nutrition employees). A purposeful sampling approach was utilized to provide this study with information-rich data from participants within the population of the middle school site used. As previously detailed, only one criteria was employed to reduce the sample size of voluntary participants, without limiting the roles of participants within the school. Ensuring participants' confidentiality limited the descriptions that could be provided for study participants, so as not to inadvertently disclose a participant's identity. The researcher recognized that this study focused on only the middle school setting in a primarily rural state. Therefore, though the study itself could be replicated in various settings, the study is not generalizable, but it may be transferrable to all educational settings in all areas of the United States.

Validation

This study emphasized the truth-value and the reliability of the phenomenological method. Following procedures that both assured and ensured confidentiality produced honest and detailed descriptions in the interview responses from six middle school employees about their lived experiences during the first two years of restorative practices implementation. Participant data checks and a voluntary demographics questionnaire enhanced the validity of this study. The practice of researcher bracketing prevented researcher bias in the study's data collection and analysis. The purposeful sampling methodology and the research-based data analysis framework

produced coherence of the study's results and its transferability and/or replication for future phenomenological studies.

Credibility. A primary characteristic of this study was to ensure the confidentiality of participation. Participants were more forthright and descriptive with their experiences knowing that they were anonymous to any reader or researcher analyzing this study. Identifying information about the urban area, school district, and middle school that is the target population of the study will at no time be shared in this study to protect participants' confidentiality. Just as the scientific method requires credibility to show validity, this study included intentional data checks with participants to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the data. As previously discussed, the process of creating a Researcher Subjective Statement and reviewing it throughout the study emphasized the use of bracketing to avoid any researcher presuppositions and/or biases. Following the transcription of each interview, participants were provided with a copy of the transcription to review in the event that the verbatim response or description did not hold the intent behind their response. Any additional notes from these transcript reviews were noted in the interview transcripts. Interview participants engaged in a second interview which provided a second data source from each person to aid in the elimination of any inconsistencies. Notes were taken in a note-taking matrix during telephone interviews. These were shared with each participant for review, as was done following the first interview (Groenewald, 2004; Muswazi & Nhamo, 2013; Sousa, 2014). Rich, thick descriptions provided in the study participants' interviews increased the credibility of the study.

Dependability. This study demonstrated a reliable and transferrable method for exploring the *essence* of school employees' lived experiences during the first two years of restorative practices implementation. Purposeful sampling as the method for determining study

participants increased the dependability of this study, as precautions were taken to ensure that participants had all experienced two years of restorative practices implementation. Study participation was offered to all staff members which encouraged a more diverse cross-section of voluntary participants. The limited demand of participant time and the use of chronology in study participant selection ensured the likelihood of participant follow-through based upon convenience and interest level.

Participant interviews were a reliable and transferable instrument to execute this phenomenological study. The Castillo-Montoya's (2016) Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) Framework was employed to demonstrate the reliability of the data collected in participant interviews that both contextualized and apprehended the phenomenon of school-based restorative practices implementation. The benefits and reliability of interview transcriptions and the additional participant interview checks enhanced the value of the data sources. Using a note-taking matrix to organize the telephone interview notes allowed for consistent and accurate compilation of participants' interview notes. An adapted model of Yüksel and Yildirim's (2015) eight-step, Moustakas-based (1994) framework will provide future researchers with the ability to replicate this study's phenomenological data analysis process (see Figure 6).

Expected Findings

The primary research objective of this study was to explore the *essence* of six middle school employees' lived experiences during the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation using a transcendental phenomenological approach. This study did not pose a hypothesis, nor did it seek to create theory for future social science research. Following Husserl's transcendental phenomenological design (Lavertys, 2003), this qualitative study aimed only to provide descriptive evidence of the *essence* of a lived experience and not to analyze the

lived experience itself. While the researcher acknowledges that a participant sample of six could lead to site-specific results, the information-rich descriptions gathered through this research study will express the *essence* of this study participant's lived experiences, and further, the phenomenological design and research-based data analysis framework of this study allow for replication in future phenomenological research studies.

Ethical Issues

Conflict of interest assessment. Human relations were taken into consideration surrounding the researcher and study participants. A conflict of interest assessment took place, so that the researcher was not in a role that impacted the truthfulness and reliability of study participants' responses about their experiences of restorative practices implementation (APA, 2017). The conflict of interest assessment was reviewed by the Concordia University Institutional Review Board (CU IRB). This study did not begin with any preconceived notion of the direction of outcomes of the results. The researcher utilized the practice of bracketing to ensure that her prior knowledge of restorative practices research and implementation did not have an effect on the study's data collection and data analysis, and ultimately, did not impact the study's results.

Researcher's position. This study's researcher serves as a middle school administrator (in a different district than the study site) and has a personal passion for transforming school climate and culture through the implementation of restorative practices. Throughout her educational, personal, and professional experiences, it became evident to the researcher that leaders must plan strategically before they begin this journey. As a career educator, the researcher understood the various historical and present-day practices and policies that impact the implementation of restorative practices within the school setting. Though this study did not

seek to derive meaning from the lived experiences of participants, the researcher was cognizant that she needed to bracket her own lived experiences surrounding restorative work and school climate transformation. Bracketing was employed by the researcher throughout all aspects of the study's data analysis by referencing the Researcher Subjectivity Statement, which is detailed in the Researcher Background section of Chapter 4.

Ethical issues in the study. This study utilized the APA's Section 8 standards surrounding the ethical considerations of research and took specific measures to uphold those considerations. This study gained institutional approval through the CU IRB, which followed the institution's requirements for research. In accordance with Sections 3.10, 8.02, 8.03, and 8.05, study participants received specific information surrounding the logistics and requirements of the study (APA, 2017). Another critical component of this study was the assurance of confidentiality of participants. Processes to ensure confidentiality were shared in advance with participants. Strong considerations were taken when reporting this study's research findings. The primary focus on this study was to describe the essence of participants' experience through the identification of core themes in the interviews. There was no fabrication of participants' experiences of restorative practices implementation (APA, 2017). The data collected in this study was secured in a password-protected, secure device that was only accessible to the researcher. Following the publication of this study, the researcher will take the reasonable steps to correct any errors (APA, 2017). All required ethical research considerations were taken in this phenomenological study (APA, 2017).

Summary of Chapter 3

The purpose of this study was to create data-rich descriptions of the lived experiences of middle school employees during the first two years of restorative practices implementation. The

researcher used transcendental phenomenology to engage study participants in a two-tiered interview process. Interview transcriptions and notes were compiled and analyzed using a research-based framework to identify core themes of the lived experiences of study participants. This chapter also explored the limitations of the research design, as well as the study's validation, expected findings, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 will include this study's data analysis and the presentation of the study's results.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to create a more robust and holistic body of descriptive research surrounding school-based restorative practices implementation. Thus, the study's aim was to answer the research question: What are the lived experiences of school employees during the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation? There is limited phenomenological research surrounding restorative practices implementation in the K–12 school setting, and there are no known transcendental phenomenological studies that focus solely on the creation of data-rich descriptions of middle school employees' lived experiences during the initial years of implementation (Disney, 2018; Loomer, 2017; Meagher, 2009; Polizzi, 2011). Schools would benefit from using this research to aid in the strategic planning of restorative practices initiatives.

Using a transcendental phenomenological approach, this study followed a two-tiered interview format that followed a research-based Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) Framework (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Data were collected using interview transcriptions and note-taking matrices. The horizontalization and coding of the meaning units in each individual participant's dataset led to the development of data-rich individual textural descriptions where the core themes of each participants' experiences were explicitly expressed through verbatim excerpts. Through the process of imagination variation, the researcher created individual structural descriptions of the school employees' lived experiences and constructed a composite structural description of the lived experience. Using a synthesis of the individual textural and structural descriptions, composite structural descriptions, verbatim excerpts, and participants' voluntary demographics data, the researcher created an expression of the essence of the lived

experiences of six middle school employees during the first two years of restorative practices implementation.

Researcher Background

This study's researcher was an at-risk coordinator for two years, a classroom teacher for 12 years in an alternative high school, and then served as a district culture and climate transformation facilitator for two years. During that time, they provided professional learning opportunities and support district-wide in the areas of social and emotional learning, behavior supports, chronic absenteeism, restorative practices, and intercultural development. The researcher currently serves as a middle school administrator (in a different district than the study site) and has a personal passion for transforming school climate and culture. Throughout their educational, personal, and professional experiences, it has been evident to the researcher that leaders must plan strategically before they begin the journey of implementing restorative practices in any setting. As a career educator, the researcher understands the various historical and present-day practices and policies that impact the implementation of restorative practices within the school setting. Though this study did not seek to derive meaning from the lived experiences of participants, the researcher was cognizant that they needed to bracket their personal passion and professional experiences surrounding restorative work. Bracketing was employed by the researcher throughout all aspects of the study's data analysis by referencing the Researcher Subjectivity Statement, which is depicted in Figure 7.

I am cognizant of my personal passion and professional experiences surrounding restorative practices. Through these experiences and a thorough examination of the literature, it is clear that further investigation of school staff members' experiences during restorative practices implementation would be a beneficial addition to restorative practices research. It is critical that I remain neutral when analyzing the data collected in the interview transcripts and researcher notes. All statements made by participants are of equal value, and meaning units will not be identified as having greater or lesser importance based upon my own personal values, opinions, and experiences.

Figure 7. Researcher subjectivity statement.

Description of the Sample

Target population and purposeful sampling. The general population for this study was a group of six Iowa middle school employees who had experienced the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation within the middle school study site. A larger population, such as those used in quantitative studies, was not necessary to draw a descriptive understanding of study participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon; thus, a sample size of six staff members allowed for the collection of information-rich descriptions of school employees' lived experiences (Creswell, 1998; Morse, 1994). The chosen middle school site resides in an urban area in a primarily rural state (Iowa). As previously discussed, the demographics of the middle school site itself are more diverse than the state and also the school district as a whole (see Table 2). There are higher percentages of students of color, students being served in special education, students served through Section 504 plans, and students receiving free or reduced lunch at the middle school study site (see Table 3).

Proponents of school-based restorative practices implementation emphasize the importance of all school employees being a part of implementation processes. For this reason, the opportunity to participate in this study was extended to all school employees at the study site (see Appendix G). This included both certified staff members (administrators, school counselors,

classroom teachers) and classified staff members (paraprofessionals, custodians, and food and nutrition staff). A school administrator was contacted by email to present the study opportunity to school staff members; at the time of this study, there were 67 school employees. There were 11 school employees who responded with an interest in participating. The list of respondents was narrowed down using one specific criterion: staff members must have participated in the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation at the middle school study site. Two respondents had only been working at the middle school for one year; thus, they were not chosen to participate. Of the remaining nine respondents, the first six people who expressed interest and met the one criterion were identified as the study participants.

Participant demographics. It is important to note that only certified school staff members responded with an interest to participate in this study. Certified staff members included classroom teachers, school counselors, and administrators. In an effort to provide truthfulness and reliability of this study, a primary characteristic was to assure and ensure anonymity of study participation. While preserving this study component, the researcher delivered a voluntary demographic and informational questionnaire to study participants in an effort to provide some descriptive information about study participants (see Appendix Q). The five areas assessed were their certified role at the school site, their years of experience working in an educational setting, their comfort level using restorative practices, their satisfaction level during restorative practices implementation, their preferred pronoun usage (see Table 5).

Table 5

Study Participant Questionnaire

Demographics descriptors		Questionnaire choices		
Certified role at the middle school study site	Administrator	School Counselor	Classroom Teacher	I would prefer not answering.
Years of experience working in an educational setting	1–5 years	6–10 years	11+ years	I would prefer not answering.
Comfort level using restorative practices in your role	I am not comfortable.	I am somewhat comfortable.	I am very comfortable.	I would prefer not answering.
Satisfaction level during restorative practices implementation	I was not satisfied with the experience.	I was somewhat satisfied with the experience.	I was very satisfied with the experience.	I would prefer not answering.
Preferred pronoun usage in study documentation	He/his	She/hers	They/theirs	

Note. This table displays the descriptors and choices in the demographics questionnaire.

Study participants' responses are organized in Table 6. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity. The study included two administrators, Charlie and Jordan, one school counselor, Kris, and three classroom teachers, Finley, Madison, and Tobi. Charlie, Madison, and Tobi were veteran certified educators who identified that they had been in the field of education for 11+ years. Jordan had been a certified educator in the field for 6–10 years. Finley and Kris were newer certified educators who identified that they had 1–5 years in the field of education. Charlie and Jordan identified as male, and Finley, Kris, Madison, and Tobi identified as female. In the voluntary questionnaire, Charlie, Finley, Jordan, and Tobi indicated that they felt “very comfortable” using restorative practices in their current role, while Kris and

Madison indicated that they felt “somewhat comfortable”. Charlie, Finley, and Jordan indicated that they were “very satisfied” with the experience of restorative practices implementation, and Kris, Madison, and Tobi indicated that they were “somewhat satisfied” with the experience (see Table 6).

Table 6

Questionnaire Responses

Study participant (Pseudonym assigned)	Certified role at the middle school study site	Years of experience working in an educational setting	Comfort level using restorative practices in your role	Satisfaction level during restorative practices implementation	Preferred pronoun usage in study documentation
Charlie	Administrator	11+ years	I am very comfortable.	I was very satisfied with the experience.	He/his
Finley	Classroom Teacher	1–5 years	I am very comfortable.	I was very satisfied with the experience.	She/hers
Jordan	Administrator	6–10 years	I am very comfortable.	I was very satisfied with the experience.	He/his
Kris	School Counselor	1–5 years	I am somewhat comfortable.	I was somewhat satisfied with the experience.	She/hers
Madison	Classroom Teacher	11+ years	I am somewhat comfortable.	I was somewhat satisfied with the experience.	She/hers
Tobi	Classroom Teacher	11+ years	I am very comfortable.	I was somewhat satisfied with the experience.	She/hers

Note: This table depicts participants’ responses to the voluntary demographics questionnaire.

Research Methodology and Analysis

Qualitative design. A thorough review of the literature found that the majority of school-based restorative practices research was quantitative in nature and focused predominantly on the reduction of exclusionary discipline practices in response to problem behaviors. Conversely, qualitative research methods garner an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon and are often centered on the how and why of a particular issue, process, situation, subculture, scene or set of social interactions (Drowkin, 2012). “Staff buy-in” was identified as a critical component for school-based restorative practices implementation, and there was an identified need to better understand the lived experiences of school employees to gain more insight into their experiences (Denver School-Based Restorative Practices Partnership, 2017). Thus, a qualitative research methodology was chosen for this study.

Phenomenology. Phenomenology explicitly addresses research questions that focus on the *essence* of participants’ lived experiences of a particular phenomenon. In the context of this study, the phenomenon was the experience of school-based restorative practices implementation. Phenomenological research strives to gain a better understanding of the subjective experiences of human beings through a transcendental philosophical approach (Lavertys, 2003). For this reason, a phenomenological research design was chosen as the most appropriate methodological approach for this study. Though this study did not seek to develop theory itself about school-based restorative practices implementation, the study did seek to identify the emergent core themes of the lived experiences of study participants. Using a research-based interview protocol, the researcher developed open-ended and probing questions to employ through a two-tiered participant interview approach that would both contextualize and apprehend the phenomenon (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). These interviews provided this study with rich, informational

descriptions in the form of two data sources- interview transcriptions and researcher notes (Bevans, 2014; Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Giorgi, 1997; Groenewald, 2004; Muswazi & Nhamo, 2013; Sousa, 2014). This study replicated an eight-step data analysis framework that was created by Yüksel and Yildirim (2015), which accounted for epoché, phenomenological reduction, imagination variation, and *essence*.

Epoché. Data analysis in this study began with the creation of a Researcher Subjectivity Statement prior to the start of the phenomenological reduction steps in an effort to bracket the researcher from their previous experiences surrounding school-based restorative practices implementation (Figure 8). This bracketing step was encouraged in Yüksel and Yildirim's (2015) data analysis framework, which was used as the foundation for this study's data analysis. The researcher was cognizant of their potential biases and wanted to be preventative in bracketing those experiences from impacting this study. The researcher visited and revisited the Researcher Subjectivity Statement before and after each interview, before and after transcribing interviews, and throughout all steps of the data analysis process.

Phenomenological reduction. As previously discussed, this study's adapted phenomenological reduction process executed steps 1–3 twice (see Figure 6). Following each participant's interview transcription, the researcher horizontalized the data, reduced of experiences to invariant constituents, and thematically clustered the initial core themes of each participant's lived experience. Through this process, individual statements in each participant's transcript held equal value, and the statements that overlapped or were not relevant were removed. In textural language, the statements as meaning units were clustered into the initial core themes of each participant's description. These initial core themes guided the creation of

transitional and critical probing interview questions for each participant's second interview to potentially gain additional details of participants' lived experiences (see Appendix E).

The data collected in each of the second interviews was organized into a note-taking matrix in the form of researcher notes. This information was compiled with the data from the first interview, and the data underwent a second round of steps 1–3 of the phenomenological reduction process (see Figure 7). After cleaning up the compiled data by horizontalizing and reducing the experiences to the invariant constituents of each interview, transcripts were codified to identify themes and subthemes. The coding and re-coding of data was completed using colors of fonts and highlights, and then the data was grouped thematically based upon similar verbiage and ideas. Direct quotations and groupings were identified and reassessed as meaning units multiple times throughout the phenomenological reduction process until the core themes had clearly emerged. Individual participants' core themes began to emerge through the coding process.

The fourth step in this study's phenomenological reduction process included the validation of invariant constituents using study participants' datasets, which included the interview transcriptions and researcher notes. The fifth and final step of phenomenological reduction process was the creation of individual textural descriptions. These textural descriptions organized literal excerpts of each individual participant's lived experiences during the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation (see Appendices I–N).

Imagination variation. The researcher studied the textural descriptions and imagined what it would be like to live the phenomenon of school-based restorative practices implementation in a middle school and created the structures to describe the lived experiences of the study's participants (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). Core themes of the experience were

organized into individual structural descriptions. These are included in the Presentation of the Data section of this chapter. The researcher then codified the data provided in each individual study participant's structural descriptions to identify the emergent core themes of the lived experience, and composite structural descriptions of the lived experience were created.

Summary of the Findings

At the conclusion of the data analysis process, the results gleaned robust descriptions of the six study participants' lived experiences during the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation. The five core themes of the lived experience were identified as the role of the "why," the impact of restorative practices on school culture and climate, daily applications of restorative approaches; cultivating a sense of belonging and emotional safety, and critical factors for restorative practices implementation. The *essence* of study participants' lived experiences is expressed using individual and composite structural descriptions and a synthesis of the core themes of the experiences using textural evidence and the composite structural descriptions to organize the data. Core themes are not numbered in any specific order of importance and are depicted in Figure 8.

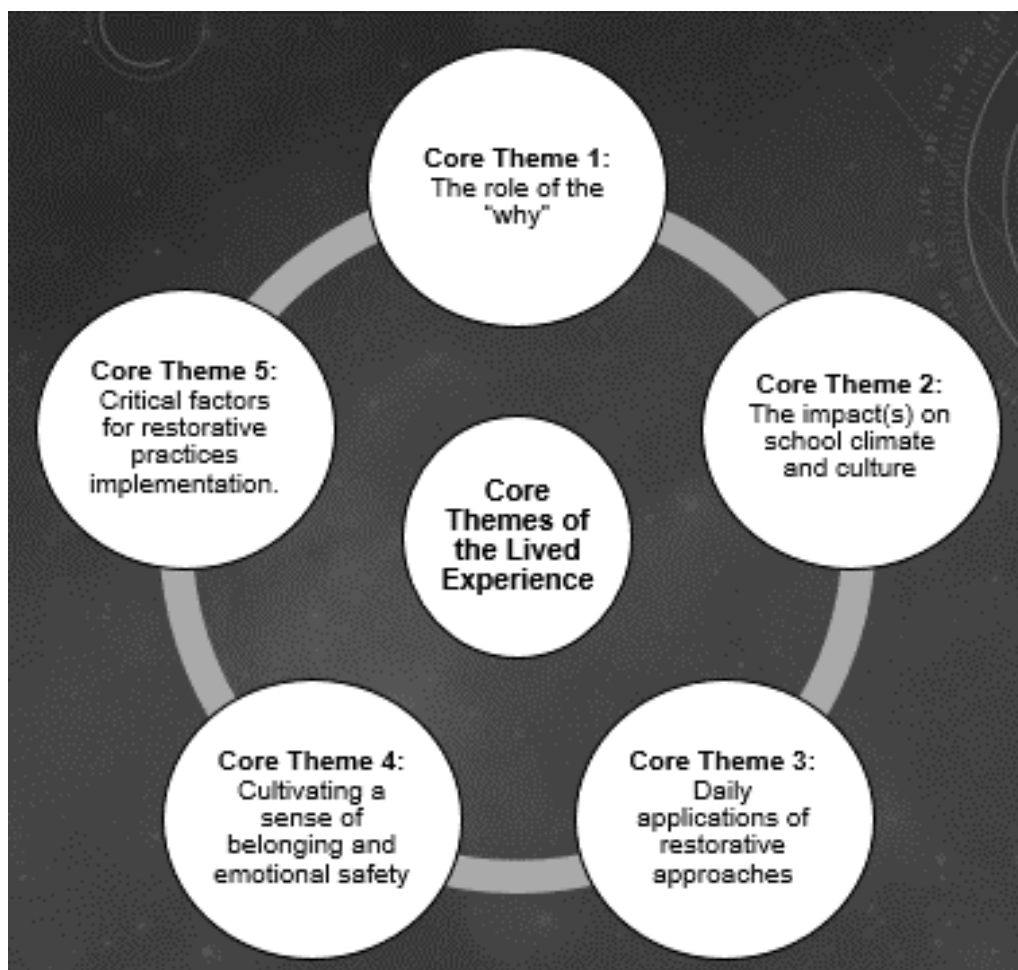


Figure 8. Core themes of the lived experience.

Presentation of the Data

The emergent five core themes of the lived experience were identified using the descriptive analyses of the data collected through interviewing six middle school employees. As previously discussed, textural descriptions were created as the last step of the phenomenological reduction process (see Appendices I–N). The researcher then imagined each participant’s lived experiences and created the structures to describe the core themes of their individual experiences (see Tables 7–12). Using the individual structural descriptions, the researcher created composite structural descriptions to organize the core themes of participants’ lived experiences during the first two years of restorative practices implementation (see Table 13). These core themes were

expressed through rich descriptions that used textural evidence and the organizational structure of the composite structural descriptions.

Table 7

Charlie's Individual Structural Descriptions

Core themes	Structural descriptions of core themes
A restorative practices mindset	Restorative practices as a “moral imperative” Shifting mindset from punitive to restorative
The role of leadership in implementation	Importance of a leader’s self-reflection Communicating the “why” behind restorative practices Active, ongoing effort to create staff and community buy-in
Impact(s) on school climate and culture	Understanding the potential positive impact(s) Understanding the potential negative impact(s) of poor implementation

Note. This table depicts structural descriptions of the core themes of Charlie’s lived experiences.

Table 8

Finley's Individual Structural Descriptions

Core themes	Structural descriptions of core themes
Building community	Cultivating a sense of belonging and an emotionally safe space Importance of giving students a “voice” Providing opportunities for empathy and accountability
Classroom management	Transitioning to restorative practices in the classroom Experiences as a “newer” educator Understanding the concept of “consequences”
Personal/professional growth	Importance of ongoing professional development Individual journey

Note. This table depicts structural descriptions of the core themes of Finley’s lived experiences.

Table 9

Jordan's Individual Structural Descriptions

Core themes	Structural descriptions of core themes
Cultivating a sense of belonging	Using restorative practices to build community Using restorative practices to strengthen and repair relationships/community Giving school community members a “voice”
Implementation considerations	Sustaining restorative practices implementation Staff buy-in
Understanding the “why” behind restorative practices	What is the “why”? Meeting school stakeholders’ needs Ineffectiveness of exclusionary discipline practices

Note. This table depicts structural descriptions of the core themes of Jordan’s lived experiences.

Table 10

Kris's Individual Structural Descriptions

Core themes	Structural descriptions of core themes
Using a restorative approach	An approach to all conversations Circle processes Resolving conflicts
Positive impacts on relationships	Student-student relationships Student-staff relationships Staff-staff relationships
The importance of emotional safety	Self-reflection Participant openness and body language
Implementation considerations	Creating staff buy-in The role of leadership Ongoing commitment to professional development

Note: This table depicts structural descriptions of the core themes of Kris’s lived experiences.

Table 11

Madison's Individual Structural Descriptions

Core Themes	Structural Descriptions of Core Themes
Implementation considerations	Strategic planning as a critical component The role of leadership Appropriate application of restorative practices
Applying restorative approaches	Personal impression/application of restorative practices
Dissatisfaction with the lived experience	Feeling detachment from implementation processes Feeling undervalued as an “experienced” teacher Unsure of restorative practices effectiveness in their classroom Frustration during classroom circles

Note. This table depicts structural descriptions of the core themes of Madison’s lived experiences.

Table 12

Tobi's Individual Structural Descriptions

Core themes	Structural descriptions of core themes
Positive impact on school cultural and climate	Experiencing the beginning of implementation Giving students a “voice”
Daily applications of restorative approaches	Using restorative circles in the classroom Commitment to circle norms and traditions Evolution of circles in the classroom over time
Implementation considerations	The importance of ongoing commitment to restorative practices by all school stakeholders Emphasis on continuous improvement Staff onboarding processes

Note. This table depicts structural descriptions of the core themes of Tobi’s lived experiences.

Table 13

Composite Structural Descriptions

Core themes of the lived experience	Structural descriptions of core themes
The role of the “why”	What is the “why”? Communicating the “why” behind restorative practices Restorative practices as a “moral imperative” Ineffectiveness of exclusionary discipline practices Providing opportunities for empathy and accountability Appropriate application of restorative practices
The impact(s) on school climate and culture	The evolution of circles over time Impacts on relationships Understanding the potential negative impact(s) of poor implementation
Daily applications of restorative approaches	Using restorative circles in the classroom Commitment to circle norms and traditions Classroom management Shifting mindset from punitive to restorative
Cultivating a sense of belonging and emotional safety	Using restorative practices to build community Using restorative practices to strengthen and repair relationships/community Giving all school community members a “voice” Participant openness and body language
Critical factors for restorative practices implementation	Strategic planning as a critical component The role of leadership Ongoing commitment to restorative practices by all school stakeholders Emphasis on continuous improvement Onboarding processes for new staff

Note. This table depicts the composite structural descriptions of the core themes of the lived experience.

Core theme 1: The role of the “why”. Study participants extensively spoke about what the researcher called the “why” behind restorative practices. All participants described the negative impact(s) that trauma can have on human beings and how restorative practices provide a way for school community members to build community and navigate conflict in a trauma-informed way. Jordan described the importance of understanding the impact of trauma on the adolescent brain, and Charlie stated that [we] have many students “living in hurt” throughout the world. Tobi acknowledged this as well and identified that restorative practices not only support students, but that they also support staff members, because there are a lot of “wounded people” in the world today. Participants described the importance of providing people with opportunities to heal; Finley stated that “it’s about that human-to-human connection”. There was an acknowledgement throughout all interviews that restorative practices are seen by some people as a “buzzword” practice to be “trauma-informed” or to improve school culture and climate and reduce the use of exclusionary discipline practices. Kris addressed this in detail based upon her experiences and stated, “It’s not a new fad going through. It’s just how we want to be approaching kids and approaching families, and really, just approaching each other.”

All of the study participants indicated that communicating about the “why” was an important part of their experiences. Administrators spoke of their experiences communicating the “why” to all school stakeholders. Charlie described his past experience working with a different school to implement restorative practices, where he did not feel there had been sufficient communication of the “why” to students, staff members, and community members. This garnered negative impacts on school climate and culture, which the researcher addressed in more detail in the Core Theme 2 section of this chapter. Jordan discussed that he communicated with school stakeholders about the “why” through professional learning opportunities and a

community action team that involved parents and local organizations and businesses. Kris, Finley, Madison, and Tobi all described that during their school's implementation, the "why" had been communicated through professional development sessions, restorative practices trainings, and ongoing communication through administrator emails or videos, books, and articles about restorative practices in schools.

In exploring and communicating the "why" throughout the school community, there was an urgency explained throughout all participants' descriptions of their lived experiences. Charlie even called this a "moral imperative". In addition to the previously discussion of the "why" behind exhibiting practices that are "trauma-informed," participants discussed how they believed that young people need to learn to navigate conflict appropriately because there is so much youth violence today. Charlie and Madison both detailed their experiences working with youth who have experienced gun violence in their lives, and that they believe that restorative practices provide a mechanism for youth to discuss these issues with adults in their lives and their peers. Charlie indicated that he felt this "moral imperative" must be repeatedly communicated and emphasized by school leaders, because for some students, "it's life or death." Jordan, Kris, and Tobi indicated that they felt that when schools teach young people to resolve conflict, they are providing students with workplace skills to set them up for success when they become adults. They felt this rationale needed to be communicated to all stakeholders more often. Finley identified restorative practices as an "equitable" way to address problem behaviors in schools and felt this needed to be communicated to parents and community members. Charlie addressed the "moral imperative" of addressing the disproportionalities of exclusionary discipline measures, stating that, as educators, "it is our job to stand in the gap."

Study participants not only discussed addressing the inequities of exclusionary discipline measures as a “moral” component of the “why” component. They also spent time identifying the ineffectiveness of these practices within their own personal experiences. Jordan stated, “I think the evidence is clear [showing] the negative impacts of . . . punitive discipline models,” and he felt that within his practice, he had experienced nothing to suggest that “removing a student from [a] class changes the behavior or makes them feel more connected or anything like that.”

Madison and Tobi described how they felt that sending students out of the classroom rarely resulted in students making different decisions in the future. Finley described her frustrations with traditional punitive models and their ineffectiveness at changing her students’ behavior; she indicated that when she uses a restorative model, she instead feels that she is doing the “right thing” even if the behavior change does not happen immediately. All participants emphasized that a restorative approach does not work every time something happens, but they indicated that using a restorative approach did not diminish the relationship between them and the student.

Study participants described how a sense of increased empathy and accountability were critical components of the “why,” and that in most of their experiences, helping students navigate negative situations using a restorative approach resulted in changed behavior over time. Kris identified that when students can see how their choices have impacted others, the changes begin to take place. In describing her experiences, Finley stated:

Restorative practices [are] still about holding high expectations and holding people accountable and students to that expectation, but it’s just about collaborating together about how we can get that through alternative means that doesn’t just include them getting suspended and then not really addressing the issue.

Tobi discussed how this happens more quickly for some students than others, but that educators should remain diligent and patient because there are situations where “it takes time.”

Study participants discussed their concerns with schools being intentional about their own purpose and rationale of implementing restorative practices, so that they are applied appropriately. Though the reduction of exclusionary discipline practices were repeatedly identified as the “why” that schools generally use as their rationale for restorative practices implementation, participants emphasized that this cannot and should not be the only reason for restorative practices implementation. Jordan felt that schools would not be as successful in their implementation if that reduction was the primary focus. He indicated his belief that community-building with an emphasis on giving stakeholders a “voice” needed to be the primary rationale of school-based restorative practices implementation.

Table 14

Core Theme 1: The Role of the “Why”

Structural descriptions	Textural evidence
What is the “why”?	<p>Finley: “I mean, it’s about that human-to-human connection . . . When you see how the other person is feeling, intuitively we can’t deny . . . We know what it feels like.”</p> <p>Kris: “It’s not a new fad going thru. It’s just how we want to be approaching kids and approaching families, and really, just approaching each other.”</p>
Communicating the “why” behind restorative practices	<p>Charlie: “I think the ‘why’ is critically important . . . I don’t think you can ever spend too much time doing that portion of it before getting to the technical pieces of it.”</p> <p>Madison: “I think that often, this is just [looked at as] ‘one more thing’ . . . It’s not just another thing you check off.”</p>
Restorative practices as a “moral imperative”	<p>Charlie: “You have to pull in a moral imperative . . . like, ‘If we don’t do this, kids’ lives are at stake.’ Or ‘It’s life or death for children.’ It is our job to stand in the gap.”</p>
Ineffectiveness of exclusionary discipline practices	<p>Jordan: “I think the evidence is clear [showing] the negative impacts of . . . punitive discipline models . . . and there’s no evidence that suggests removing a student from the class changes the behavior or makes them feel more connected or anything like that.</p>
Providing opportunities for empathy and accountability	<p>Finley: “Restorative practices is still about holding high expectations and holding people accountable and students to that expectation, but it’s just about collaborating together about how we can get that through alternative means that doesn’t just include them getting suspended and then not really addressing the issue.”</p>
Appropriate application of restorative practices	<p>Jordan: “Schools fail when goal is to reduce referrals and suspensions . . . [and find] success when the view is to support well-being.”</p> <p>Madison: “What I’m experiencing is a major gray area because it’s totally based on how other people perceive restorative practices.”</p>

Note. This table depicts textural evidence of the structural descriptions of Core Theme 1.

Core theme 2: The impact(s) on school climate and culture. There were detailed textural descriptions provided by all study participants about what they experienced as the impacts of restorative practices on their school's climate and culture (see Table 15). It is important to note that at no time did study participants discuss a reduction of referrals and/or suspensions as a part of their explanations for changes in culture and climate. Participants' descriptions included the evolution of circles over time that they had experienced, the impacts of restorative practices on relationships throughout their school, and their understanding of the potential negative impacts of poor implementation.

Kris and Tobi detailed how the circles they facilitated had evolved over time through the two initial years of restorative practices implementation. They described how the evolution of these circles into a meaningful practice directly illustrated the change in the culture and climate of the spaces over time when they worked with students. Jordan discussed how from his perspective, climate and culture within the school improved as staff members more consistently employed circle processes into their interactions with students. Finley, Kris, Madison, and Tobi identified that they felt that the more circles were used, the more comfortable both students and staff became, and slowly, the culture and climate of the school improved over time. Jordan attributed this improvement to increased and deepened relationships amongst circle participants.

All study participants spent time discussing the impacts of restorative practices implementation on relationships within their school community. This included relationships between students, between students and staff members, and between staff members. Tobi stated:

I feel like it is night and day from three years ago. It is not the same place that it was three years ago . . . I feel like we are very conscientious about what our culture is between us and between us and our students- the 'we.'

She described her prior assumption that her students already knew each other well, but as circle usage progressed, she learned that this had really been a false assumption, and that students really did not know one another as well as she had previously thought. Charlie described how circle participants' relationships deepened when they worked together to find solutions together during tough situations. All participants felt that staff relationships improved in their school during restorative practices implementation, and it is important to note that study participants spent more time describing the relational impacts amongst staff members than they did amongst students or between students and staff. Madison indicated that their staff needed to continuously have "tough conversations" about student behaviors and school culture and climate and indicated the importance of these staff circles as an ongoing component to restorative practices implementation. This sentiment was echoed by Finley, Kris, and Tobi; they described that during the second year of implementation, when there were less whole-staff discussions, they felt that negatively impacted the relational progress that had been made during the first year of implementation.

In various ways, study participants described their understanding of the potential negative impact(s) of poor implementation of restorative practices on school culture and climate. It is important to note that participants did not at any time describe that restorative practices themselves had a negative impact; they were specific that poor implementation could potentially result in a negative staff culture. Kris, Madison, and Tobi indicated that within their school setting, they felt that the implementation became "stuck" or "stagnant" during the second year of implementation because ongoing learning and staff conversations were not consistently taking place as they had been during the first year. Charlie described another school he had worked with that spent more time writing procedures and policies connected to restorative practices than they

did on communicating the “why” and on training all staff members about the practices. He described the resulting staff culture as “toxic,” and although he was hopeful that someday that school would “get there.” He indicated that he felt the poor implementation at the beginning would make it difficult due to the negative feelings that staff members associated with their previous implementation experiences.

Table 15

Core Theme 2: The Impact(s) on School Climate and Culture

Structural Descriptions	Textural Evidence
The evolution of circles over time	<p>Kris: “I feel like now we have lots of kids who come up and request . . . to have a restorative conversation”</p> <p>Tobi: “When we start at the beginning of the year, [students are] like ‘What? What are we doing? How are we doing this?’ . . . [Start with] something simple and easy and relaxing.”</p>
Impact(s) on relationships	<p>Finley: “I think to get a better, stronger, and more positive climate, restorative practices is definitely a key component of that because if students feel respected and safe, and they’re in an environment where people . . . they feel heard, because a basic need as human being is to feel heard and to have some sort of control.”</p> <p>Tobi: “I feel like it is night and day from three years ago. It is not the same place that it was three years ago . . . I feel like we are very conscientious about what our culture is between us and between us and our students- the ‘we.’”</p>
Understanding the potential negative impact(s) of poor implementation	<p>Charlie: “It can have a very negative impact on school culture if there is not a very intentional effort to foster what it really means to be ‘restorative.’”</p> <p>Madison: “If the implementation is weak . . . I mean, if you tell me in an email ‘this is what I need you to do’ . . . If there is weak implementation, it is going to be weak across the board.</p>

Note. This table depicts textural evidence of the structural descriptions of Core Theme 2.

Core theme 3: Daily applications of restorative approaches. All study participants provided descriptions about their daily applications of restorative approaches (see Table 16), which included the use of affective statements and questioning, community-building circles, reparative restorative circles, and formal restorative conferencing. It is important to note that Finley, Kris, Madison, and Tobi utilized both proactive and responsive practices within their classrooms and advisory groups on a daily basis. Circles and formal conferencing that were focused on conflict resolution or re-entry to school following a suspension were more applicable to administrators' experiences. As administrators, the frequency of Charlie's and Jordan's experiences with these processes were dependent upon the frequency of student issues that presented themselves. Charlie, Finley, Jordan, and Tobi all indicated in their voluntary questionnaire responses that they felt "very comfortable" using restorative approaches in their daily applications, while Kris and Madison indicated they were "somewhat comfortable."

Finley, Kris, Madison, and Tobi detailed their experiences using both proactive and responsive restorative circles to build community with and amongst their students on a daily basis. Classroom teachers used the circle processes to have discussions that were tied directly to their instruction of academic content. Kris, Madison and Tobi used circles when they directly instructed their social and emotional curriculum during their advisory groups. Charlie and Jordan did not have advisory groups but used circle norms in their administrative roles during conflict resolution circles and formal conferencing.

All study participants described their experiences regarding the importance of committing to the circle norms and creating circle traditions. Whether proactive or responsive, the circle norms were identified as a cornerstone of creating an emotionally safe space to hold circles and formal restorative conferences. Circles always included a talking piece (to take turns speaking),

and participants' identified the typical circle norms in their classes—"mutual respect," participants trusting their own "voice," participants remaining "solution-focused," practicing confidentiality and "keeping it in the circle," and using the opportunity to "pass" if they did not want to share or were not ready to share. Tobi described the opening and closing circle traditions that her advisory group was practicing at the time of the study's interview:

We have a ceremony in our room . . . kids [decided] what they wanted to do . . . They always want to do circle without lights on, so we have little tea lights, like the battery ones. The first person starts, and they all turn them on [one-by one]. It looks really cool when they do it! And that's how we close our circle out too . . . We'll go back the other direction [one-by-one]."

Tobi identified how this circle tradition had contributed to a very strong sense of community within her advisory group. Circle norms were repeatedly described by all study participants using descriptors such as "very important and "critical" to a successful circle. However, even though she felt that circle norms were in place within her class, Madison had some very negative circle experiences. Madison stated:

"[My class] would probably be one that you would videotape as one that has failed. They don't wanna talk . . . They would rather just sit back and pass the talking piece. That makes circles and community-building extremely difficult."

Whether their experiences with circles were positive or negative, all study participants indicated that circle norms needed to be in place prior to beginning the circle process, and they all felt that it was important to include students in the creation of circle norms and school expectations.

There were many detailed descriptions from study participants about the application of restorative practices and their impact on classroom management. This was more applicable to the

experiences of Finley, Madison, and Tobi as classroom teachers. They indicated that through the relational approach of building and repairing relationships, classroom management became easier during restorative practices implementation. Madison stated that “classroom management in general is tough. I think it goes back to that personal connection with the students.” Finley identified that as a “newer” educator, restorative practices provided a strong foundation for her to develop her classroom management skills, and participants felt that restorative practices should be taught in teacher education programs to give new teachers “more tools in their toolbox” to manage their classroom. Finley, Madison, and Tobi described their use of circles to problem-solve issues as a whole class. Both Finley and Tobi talked about bringing students together to solve behavioral issues that were impeding learning and instruction. They felt this method was far more productive than the traditional, punitive method of removing students from class. Classroom teachers identified that in their experiences removing students from class only compounded the issue at-hand. Jordan described that when students are removed from the classroom for exhibiting problem behaviors, they became more disconnected from the classroom community and that they were behind in classroom instruction.

The idea of shifting community mindset from punitive to restorative was embedded throughout all participants’ discussions about their daily experiences. Classroom teachers described how they needed to consistently and consciously respond differently than what they had been trained to do in the past. Finley felt that restorative values are “inherently” a part of most teachers’ mindsets, but that it is difficult to make that shift because a punitive system is the system that teachers most teachers experienced when they grew up. Charlie and Jordan discussed the traditional, mandatory punitive responses that are often detailed in school policies that are based upon zero-tolerance policy mandates. They discussed the importance of being a reflective

leader and in helping parent(s)/guardian(s) and community members through this mindset shift. Jordan emphasized the need for administrators to extend compassion to school employees who have a more difficult time during this transition and stated:

Just because a person wants a student suspended . . . just because a staff member wants punitive measures done *to* a kid, that doesn't mean they don't love kids, [and] that doesn't mean that they don't want to do well. It just means that that's been their experience.

Charlie described his ongoing need to reflect on his own practices each day to ensure that he was being consistent in using restorative practices as opposed to traditional, punitive measures to respond to more serious problem behaviors.

Table 16

Core Theme 3: Daily Applications of Restorative Approaches

Structural Descriptions	Textural Evidence
Using restorative circles in the classroom	<p>Finley: “We did a whole-class restorative circle in response to . . . a pattern of behaviors or struggles we faced in the classroom There’s definitely been a significant change in the overall classroom climate and environment. It’s not perfect, but . . . whenever we struggle, we go back to that same process.”</p> <p>Madison: “[My class] would probably be one that you would videotape as one that has failed . . . They don’t wanna talk . . . They would rather just sit back and pass the talking piece. That makes circles and community-building extremely difficult.</p>
Commitment to circle norms and traditions	<p>Kris: “We do a lot of ‘keeping it in the circle’ . . . ideas can leave the circle, but not specific stories or things like that.”</p> <p>Tobi: “We always go over our classroom norms . . . Kids could recite those in their sleep. Every time we have a community circle . . . our talking piece, and the kids know what the norms are.”</p>
Classroom management	<p>Finley: “For me, it’s made all the difference, and I’m a fairly new teacher . . . because you don’t really think about that piece when you’re becoming a teacher. And so, I struggled . . . I feel very proud of the relationships I’ve built and the classroom environment I’ve built.”</p> <p>Madison: “Classroom management in general is tough. I think it goes back to that personal . . . connection with the students.”</p>
Shifting mindset from punitive to restorative	<p>Finley: “I think a lot of people in education inherently have the values that are tied to restorative practices, but because the system for so long hasn’t been that, that it’s hard to actually put it into practice because there are all these barriers.”</p> <p>Jordan: “Just because a person wants a student suspended, just because a staff member wants punitive measures done to a kid, that doesn’t mean they don’t love kids, that doesn’t mean that they don’t want to do well. It just means that that’s been their experiences.”</p>

Note. This table depicts textural evidence of the structural descriptions of Core Theme 3.

Core theme 4: Cultivating a sense of belonging and emotional safety. Study

participants repeatedly described their lived experiences with cultivating a sense of belonging and emotional safety for all school community members (see Table 17). This was stressed with great importance and was discussed not only as something that results from restorative practices implementation, but it needed to be addressed prior to facilitating restorative circles within the classroom. As previously noted in Core Theme 1, the need for human connection in general was stressed in study participants' descriptions from their lived experiences as educators. Jordan stated his belief that:

[Humans have] really lost that connection, and we've seen students feel more disconnected from school and less like they're part of a community, so I think restorative practices allows us to strategically build community.

The use of restorative practices to build relationships and community was repeatedly identified and described throughout study participants' experiences. This was especially pertinent when participants described relationship-building amongst staff members. Although restorative practices were implemented to serve students, Jordan, Finley, Kris, and Tobi discussed that in their experiences, restorative circles in staff meetings were very impactful in building relationships amongst staff members and in providing a way to have conversations as a staff about more difficult issues. All participants believed that using circles during staff meetings and during professional development built capacity for staff members to have empathy for one another and to create a sense of belonging and emotional safety amongst school staff members.

Participants discussed the importance of building a sense of belonging and emotional safety with students. By using restorative approaches, all participants described an increased feeling of empathy and accountability with and amongst students. Finley, Madison, and Tobi

reflected on the emphasis on building relationships with students. However, prior to restorative practices implementation, they felt that they were rarely given explicit methods to consistently build relationships with students in their everyday practices. All study participants expressed that learning about and implementing restorative practices gave them research-based relationship-building strategies to consistently use to cultivate community. Study participants described how they used restorative practices to strengthen and repair relationships throughout their school community. The reparation component was described in a few different ways. Because Charlie, Jordan, and Kris were not classroom teachers, they did not hold proactive, community-building circles on a regular basis; thus, they emphasized the importance of building relationships with students through their daily interactions using affective statements, affective questioning, and impromptu conversations in their roles to build a sense of belonging, and so that students and staff members felt emotionally safe.

Classroom teachers indicated that it was very helpful that all staff were using restorative practices to strengthen and repair relationships, because a sense of belonging and emotional safety aided students in their transitions between classes and grade-levels. As previously discussed, Finley, Madison, and Tobi described their use of circles to problem-solve issues as a whole class. Both Finley and Tobi talked about how they consistently brought students together to solve behavioral issues that were impeding learning and instruction. However, they were very clear that this would not have been possible if they had not taken the time to build relationships with and amongst students prior to using a responsive circle to respond to a behavioral issue or conflict. All participants iterated that it is necessary to cultivate a sense of belonging and emotional safety *first*, so that a relationship that can be repaired. Participants consistently felt that without that initial relationship, sense of belonging, and feeling of emotional safety, a problem-

solving circle may not be effective to solve the issue at-hand and/or could potentially create an unsafe space for circle participants.

Since practicing a restorative approach can build a sense of belonging and emotional safety, there was considerable discussion from study participants about how they had experienced restorative practices as a mechanism to give all school community members a “voice.” Finley and Jordan explicitly described their experiences that when all stakeholders felt they had a “voice” in decision-making and problem-solving, that they felt more of a sense of belonging and ownership in their school community. Finley described this in relation to her classroom teaching experiences, and said that restorative practices allow “students [to] feel respected and safe, and . . . in an environment where they feel ‘heard’, because a basic need as human being is to feel ‘heard’ and to have some sort of control.” Jordan identified the importance of modelling restorative practices to provide staff members with the opportunity to share their “voice” in decision-making as well: “I think [that] just like we would want with kids, we need to build relationships *with* our staff, and we need to listen, and we need to understand why they feel the way they feel.”

Study participants described in detail how they had experienced and observed differences in participant openness and body language during restorative circles based upon whether circle participants felt a sense of belonging and emotional safety. Kris described her observations of circle participants’ body language and their verbal contributions during staff circles, her advisory group, and in small counseling groups. In all settings, she noticed that circle participants would become visibly relaxed in the way they were sitting and passing the talking piece over time if they felt a sense of belonging and emotional safety. She emphasized the importance of circle facilitators paying attention to participants’ body language throughout a circle. She stated, “If

somebody's really closed off, [do not] push them to participate . . . because they're clearly not ready for it. Whatever's going on with them that day, you just have to be really attentive to that.” Madison described her experience with a lack of openness in circles when students did not feel a sense of belonging or emotional safety in the classroom. She indicated that some participants would “take over” the conversation, while others would just pass the talking piece and choose not to contribute at all. Madison also described how participants would become both visibly and audibly irritated or detached when participants dominated conversations or talking about things which they were uncomfortable discussing when they did not feel emotionally safe.

Table 17

Core Theme 4: Cultivating a Sense of Belonging and Emotional Safety

Structural Descriptions	Textural Evidence
Using restorative practices to build community	<p>Jordan: “[Humans have] really lost that connection, and we’ve seen students feel more disconnected from school and less like they’re part of a community, so I think restorative practices allows us to strategically build community.</p> <p>Tobi: “In our school setting, we do a lot of relationships building, and we really want to make sure that kids feel comfortable coming [back] and talking with us.”</p>
Using restorative practices to strengthen and repair relationships/ community	<p>Charlie: “[Restorative practices are] a call to action by people to learn skills to help navigate conflict, get to root causes, and come to resolutions.”</p> <p>Kris: “I just had a conversation with a parent today who requested that her child have restorative conversations with two different staff members. She feels and recognizes that her daughter has kind of been targeting those staff members, which has then resulted in suspensions, and we’re kind of in this vicious cycle.”</p>
Giving all school community members a “voice”	<p>Finley: “I think to get a better, stronger, and more positive climate, restorative practices is definitely a key component of that because students feel respected and safe, and they’re in an environment where . . . they feel heard, because a basic need as human being is to feel heard and to have some sort of control.”</p> <p>Jordan: “I think just like we would want with kids, we need to build relationships with our staff, and we need to listen, and we need to understand why they feel the way they feel.”</p>
Participant openness and body language	<p>Kris: “I just think that’s something that’s really important to notice to when you’re having a circle is if somebody’s really closed off to not push them to participate or anything . . . because they’re clearly not ready for it. Whatever’s going on with them that day, you know, you just have to be really attentive to that.”</p>

Note. This table depicts textural evidence of the structural descriptions of Core Theme 4.

Core theme 5: Critical factors for restorative practices implementation. Throughout all of the participants' descriptions of their lived experiences, there were common factors identified that were important to address both *prior to* and *during* restorative practices implementation. Participants emphasized the importance of strategic planning, the role of leadership, an ongoing commitment to restorative practices by all school stakeholders, an emphasis on continuous improvement, and the creation of onboarding processes for new staff members (see Table 18). Based upon the implementation at this particular study site, Charlie, Finley, and Jordan indicated in their voluntary questionnaire that they were "very satisfied" with their experience of restorative practices implementation, while Kris, Madison, and Tobi indicated that they were "somewhat satisfied." In their interviews, all participants discussed the importance of strategic planning, the role of leadership, and an ongoing commitment; however, the emphasis on continuous improvement and the creation of onboarding processes were unique to classroom teachers.

All study participants described the importance of strategic planning in restorative practices implementation. As previously detailed in Core Theme 1, participants felt that understanding and communicating the "why" was critically important to implementation. Charlie explicitly addressed this and indicated the importance of identifying the "purpose" of a school's implementation of restorative practices and the "intended outcomes" of the implementation. Charlie, Finley, Jordan, Kris, and Tobi felt this occurred within their school, while Madison did not feel that the "why" and intended outcomes were communicated as clearly as she felt it could have been. Madison felt that too much of an emphasis was placed on reducing office referrals and suspensions, and that there could have been greater emphasis on the relationship-building component at the beginning of implementation. Participants all described the need for explicit

restorative practices training for all school staff members, and they all emphasized that brief professional development sessions and/or the sharing of articles or videos would not be sufficient in preparing school community members for restorative practices implementation.

Administrators, Charlie and Jordan, discussed the importance of educating parent(s)/guardian(s) and community members about the shift, and that in hindsight, they would have trained some of these stakeholders *prior* to implementation to support the shift from punitive to restorative.

All participants described how critical the role of leadership was both before and during restorative practices implementation. “Leadership” was not limited to the role of school administrators; study participants also emphasized the roles of building leadership team members, instructional strategists, and district-level administrators. All participants identified the importance of school leaders being “on the same page” about the “why” and the “intended outcomes.” While all participants felt that leaders needed to remain diligent in shifting practices from punitive to restorative, Jordan and Madison cautioned in the pace and manner this occurs. Jordan stated, “I think there’s a fine line between having champions in your building who are really pushing the work and providing that professional learning versus *making* everybody do it.” Madison felt that no matter how passionate a leader was, that if there was not community buy-in, that passion did not matter. She also discussed that, as a “veteran” teacher, she and other veteran teachers felt that they were already doing this, but that it had just been “called something different.” For this reason, she emphasized the importance of administrators listening to how veteran teachers are feeling during restorative practices implementation.

Participants’ described the importance of taking the time to educate the public about restorative practices, and there was a repeated emphasis on the importance of *ongoing* commitment to restorative practices by all school stakeholders *throughout* implementation.

Charlie emphasized that implementation requires an ongoing emphasis on educating the public about the “why” and “intended outcomes” of restorative practices. Jordan described how staff members felt that there had been more district-level support during the first year of restorative practices implementation. He felt that after implementation began to show positive results, the district had shifted its focus to a different area of professional development (“the next best thing”), which left the school questioning the district’s ongoing support. Kris described that she felt that, as a staff, they had “taken a step back” during the second year when there was not as much of an emphasis on restorative practices in staff meetings. Finley, Madison, and Tobi all identified that they wished there had been more professional development provided during the second year of restorative practices implementation because they did not feel that they were receiving as much district-level support.

In conjunction with an ongoing commitment by all stakeholders, all study participants described the need for honest self-reflection and an attitude of continuous improvement by all staff members. Charlie discussed how this related to his personal life:

I know for myself, that I continue to be challenged [by] the idea of restorative practices at work . . . and even in my own household with my own children. There have been some times that I have been conflicted with that, and then I’ve reverted back to previous mindsets . . . particularly with my own children . . . even though I know better, and I’ve been trained differently.

In her voluntary questionnaire, Kris indicated that she only checked that she felt “somewhat comfortable” when implementing restorative approaches in her role, because she believes that she could “always get better.” As previously noted, classroom teachers would have liked for there to be more professional development opportunities during the second year of

implementation. They felt that because the restorative practices focus didn't continue into their professional learning during the second year of implementation, they indicated that they were left to expand their knowledge and hone their skills on more of an individual basis or within grade-level teams. Finley said that she connected with "like-minded individuals" within her school to read and discuss books relating to restorative practices. Madison indicated that she was not even sure if she was "doing it right" because she did not feel like the circles in her advisory group were successful. Tobi discussed how she would like for there to be non-evaluative observation opportunities to receive feedback from peers and administrators, and she explained, "I don't know everything. I'm far from knowing how to do everything, and I want to get better at stuff, and I don't feel like you can always do that on your own." She expounded upon this when discussing the mentorship of new staff. Tobi indicated that during the second year of implementation, some new staff members had been partnered with someone who had been trained in restorative practices, but that there was not a formalized process across the board. Finley, Jordan, Madison, and Tobi all discussed that going forward, they would like to see more formalized onboarding procedures for new staff.

Table 18

Core Theme 5: Critical Factors for Restorative Practices Implementation

Structural Descriptions	Verbatim Excerpts as Evidence
Strategic planning as a critical component	<p>Charlie: “I think a lot of it has to do with intentional outcomes . . . What’s your intention? What’s the purpose?”</p> <p>Jordan: “I think there’s a fine line between having champions in your building who are really pushing the work and providing that professional learning versus <i>making</i> everybody do it.”</p>
The role of leadership	<p>Charlie: “I think it is very critically important that the leader establishes the vision and the ‘why’, [and] helps people build capacity within themselves to also be leaders in that same realm . . . [So] the work doesn’t end because they built capacity in other people to finish that kind of work.”</p> <p>Madison: “Even if the person who is implementing it is . . . 110% passionate, that doesn’t really matter . . . If you don’t have buy-in across the board? It doesn’t matter how passionate you are.”</p>
Ongoing commitment to restorative practices by all school stakeholders	<p>Jordan: “Essential pieces [include] . . . leadership and central office buy-in, commitment to the [SEL] curriculum, and a focus on community building before responsive circles.”</p> <p>Kris: “We haven’t been having those conversations as much [this year], and I feel kind of like we took a step backwards in our school climate and culture. So I feel even more strongly that that is kind of what moved our building really forward in the first place</p>
Emphasis on continuous improvement	Tobi: “I hope that we’ll spend more time with our new people . . . unless they’re gonna pair people who have done it for a while with those who haven’t done it much.”

Note: This table depicts textural evidence of the structural descriptions of Core Theme 5.

Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter detailed the data analysis procedures and results of this study. The researcher shared her background, as well as a Researcher Subjectivity Statement. The chapter included a description of the study’s sample, which included target population and purposeful

sampling, as well as participant demographics. The researcher described the qualitative design and phenomenological methodological approach used to answer the research question. In this chapter, there was a summary of the finding, as well as a presentation of the data. In Chapter 5, the researcher will provide a discussion of the results and a study conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to answer the research question “What are the lived experiences of school employees during the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation?” This chapter discusses the results of this qualitative study and includes a summary and discussion of the results, the limitations of the research, the implications of the results for practice, policy, and theory, and the researcher’s recommendations for future research. The conclusion recaptures the researcher’s methodological approach, the data collection and analyses processes, and the five core themes of the lived experience of study participants. The five core themes were identified as the role of the "why," the impact of restorative practices on school culture and climate, daily applications of restorative approaches; cultivating a sense of belonging and emotional safety, and critical factors for restorative practices implementation.

A transcendental phenomenological approach was used to develop rich descriptions of school staff members’ experiences during the first two years of the implementation of school-based restorative practices. In this study, a purposeful sampling of six school employees from one middle school was used to develop these information-rich descriptions. Both certified staff members (administrators, school counselors, and classroom teachers) and classified staff members (paraprofessionals, custodians, and food and nutrition workers) were invited to participate in this study; however, only certified staff members responded with interest to participate. Participant anonymity was preserved throughout the research process, and descriptive information about participants was provided based upon data collected from a voluntary demographic questionnaire.

The researcher used Castillo-Montoya’s (2016) Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) Framework was used to ensure validity, reliability, and transferability to prepare the questions

that were used in the study's instrumentation. The researcher interviewed the study's six study participants twice; the first interview was in person, and the second interview occurred over the telephone. The purpose of the second interview was to probe for additional details surrounding the information provided in the first interview. Data were collected in the forms of interview transcriptions (in-person interviews) and researcher notes (telephone interviews).

The researcher analyzed the collected data using an adapted version of Yüksel and Yildirim's (2015) Moustakas-based (1994) data analysis framework. This step-by-step data-analysis framework accounted for *epoché* (bracketing), phenomenological reduction, imagination variation, and *essence*. The researcher practiced bracketing through the creation of a Researcher Subjectivity Statement that was visited throughout the entire study to prevent researcher bias. Data was presented in the form of individual textural descriptions (see Appendices I–N), individual structural descriptions (see Tables 7–12), composite structural descriptions (see Table 13), and a synthesis that was created to describe the *essence* of the lived experiences of school employees during the first two years of restorative practices implementation. This synthesis was displayed through detailed descriptions of the five core themes of the experience and textural evidence to support the core themes (see Table 14–18).

Summary of the Results

The study's primary aim was to garner detailed descriptions from study participants to express the *essence* of study participants' lived experiences. The researcher did not seek to develop theory based upon the outcomes of this study. This *essence* was captured through a synthesis of the five emergent core themes of the lived experience, which were identified as the role of the "why," the impact of restorative practices on school culture and climate, daily applications of restorative approaches; cultivating a sense of belonging and emotional safety, and

critical factors for restorative practices implementation. Prior to this study, there was no published phenomenological research completed that explored the lived experiences of school employees' lived experiences during school-based restorative practices implementation, and the researcher is not aware of any qualitative research studies of this nature that have been published since the study began. There have been multiple quantitative studies conducted that have continued to examine the impacts of restorative practices implementation; these are primarily quantitative studies that analyze the impact of restorative practices on the use of exclusionary discipline practices in schools. There continues to be a void in phenomenological research surrounding restorative practices in schools.

Discussion of the Results

This study did not aim to develop theory or seek meaning from the results; however, the researcher recommends that school leaders use these core themes in their strategic planning of school-based restorative practices implementation. As previously discussed, staff buy-in has been identified as a critical component for successful and sustainable implementation. The textural evidence of the core themes illustrates what they and their colleagues may feel and experience during this initiative. This awareness would provide leaders with pertinent information regarding the proactive measures they may choose to take when creating a strong foundation to support implementation. More specifically, leaders can use this information to plan for the ongoing supports that staff may need throughout this change.

All study participants identified the importance of the role of the “why” in restorative practices implementation. This was described in various ways and the “why” was even described by Charlie as a “moral imperative.” This “moral imperative” was directly connected to participants' discussions about the goals of implementation. They discussed the need to teach

students how to reduce problem behaviors, to reduce exclusionary discipline practices, and to find ways to positively impact school climate and culture. An additional piece that was connected to this idea of the “moral imperative” was the reduction of violence in communities through teaching young people how to navigate conflict in a healthy and appropriate manner. Study participants emphasized that the “why” was not only connected to responses to student behavior. Tobi noted her current awareness that students often feel isolated or disconnected from their peers even though they spend several hours a day with them during school. All participants felt that restorative practices were a practical way to strategically build relationships with and between students within the school setting.

All study participants described ways that they believe restorative practices implementation can be impactful to school climate and culture. Participants all noted that it can have a positive or negative effect. Charlie described his past experiences in a different school setting where he did not feel that implementation had been very successful. He discussed his belief that poor implementation of restorative practices can lead to a “toxic” staff culture. Kris described the “organic nature” of staff buy-in, growth, and community-building throughout restorative practices implementation. This participant felt the experience was overall positive in nature and improved school climate. It is important to note that even though study participants had gone through the same lived experience, their own personal experiences and perceptions were not all the same. In her voluntary questionnaire response, Madison indicated that she was “somewhat satisfied” with the implementation experience; however, in her interview responses, Madison was overwhelmingly negative about the experience of restorative practices implementation. She identified that she did not feel connected to the planning and implementation itself. Since all study participants discussed their experiences and perceptions

surrounding the impacts of restorative practices implementation on school climate and culture, the researcher recommends that further restorative practices studies delve deeper into this area to examine more explicitly how and why participants may feel differently even though they all were a part of the same implementation experience.

Most participants' descriptions were positive when they discussed the use of restorative practices in their daily applications and within their respective roles and settings. Charlie, Jordan, Kris, Finley, and Tobi all spoke positively about their experience and their descriptions of using restorative approaches were typically positive. Of these five participants, Charlie, Finley, Jordan and Tobi identified in their voluntary questionnaire that they felt "very comfortable" exercises restorative practices. Tobi spent time detailing the opening and closing traditions that her class uses in circle, and she was visibly moved when describing the class traditions. While Kris indicated that she felt "somewhat comfortable," she noted that she only marked "somewhat" because she felt she could "always get better." Madison also identified that she felt "somewhat comfortable" in the voluntary questionnaire, which aligns with her feelings that the circles in her classroom were not as successful and she had hoped they would be.

Charlie and Jordan described their use of restorative circles and formal restorative conferences to resolve conflicts and to support students in re-entries following suspensions; they discussed the importance of accountability and "making things right." Classroom teachers described using circles to have academic conversations, as well to navigate conflict within their classrooms. The classroom teachers and school counselor identified that they used restorative practices to build community within the school setting within their respective roles. They all discussed their use of circles when directly instructing students in the school's social and emotional curriculum. In these community-building circles, Finley, Kris, Madison, and Tobi

emphasized the importance with starting with simpler and “shallow” questions before getting into deeper topics that may be uncomfortable. In her school counselor role, Kris emphasized that she used the restorative questions to assist students in self-reflecting on issues they might be experiencing “within themselves.” Multiple times, Kris noted the body language she had seen from students and staff who experienced the circle process. She emphasized that over time, whether in a counseling session or a circle with students and/or with staff, both children and adults became more visibly comfortable and vocal, and that the difference in the room was “palpable.” Conversely, Madison did not feel that circle processes were very effective in her classroom, and as previously discussed, she was not convinced that they can work with every group of students.

Throughout all interviews, participants consistently emphasized the importance of cultivating a sense of belonging and emotional safety in school through community-building circles and adherence to circle norms. Finley and Jordan felt that by holding circles, students felt they had a “voice” in decision-making and problem-solving. In their advisory groups, Finley, Kris, and Tobi felt that their circles were successful because students felt emotionally secure in their setting. Madison did not feel that the students within her advisory group were comfortable discussing their feelings and personal matters, and so she did not describe these advisory circles as positive experiences. This core theme surrounding emotional safety ties directly to other core themes. The “moral imperative” of helping students navigate conflict and reduce violence necessitates a sense of belonging, community, and emotional safety. These factors also impact the level of success in the daily applications of circle processes and staff members’ perceptions of how community circles impact the classroom. Staff members’ perceptions directly impact school climate and culture, and as previously discussed, staff buy-in is a critical factor for

successful and sustainable implementation. The researcher emphasizes the need for school staff members to intentionally create and maintain an emotionally safe school environment through the use of a proactive restorative approach.

All study participants discussed what they believed to be critical factors for restorative practices implementation in a school setting. The six participants were overwhelmingly consistent in this area regardless of whether they felt “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied,” and also whether they described positive or negative circle experiences. They all emphasized the importance of strategic planning, with an emphasis on communicating the “why” consistently throughout implementation. Participants all discussed the importance of strong leadership during restorative practices implementation, and their identification of “leadership” was not limited to administrators and included building leadership team members, instructional strategists, and district-level administrators. All participants described the need for an ongoing commitment to restorative practices by all school stakeholders throughout the implementation process, and they emphasized the need for continued district-level commitment and support beyond the first year. The four staff members who held daily circles in their advisory groups (Finley, Kris, Madison, and Tobi) believed that there needs to be ongoing professional development for staff members beyond the first year of implementation in order to continuously improve. Finley specifically emphasized the importance of supporting “newer” educators to the field, while Madison described the importance of supporting “veteran” teachers in this transition. All staff members described the importance of providing professional learning opportunities for new staff members in the onboarding process.

There were intersections between the role of the “why” and the impact of restorative practices implementation on school climate and culture. All study participants’ experiences

included the notion that school leaders' vision(s) of school discipline must be aligned, and that there must be an intentional "why" communicated by said leadership in order to build capacity for sustainable buy-in. Charlie noted the importance of school leaders taking the time to self-reflect to be certain that they are fully able to "coalesce around the idea" as they model these practices. Jordan discussed the importance of modeling the fundamental hypothesis of restorative practices, meaning that leaders need to implement restorative practices *with* staff as opposed to mandating it. These components were also connected to strategic planning, which was identified as a critical factor for restorative practices implementation. Participants' emphasized the need for *ongoing* communication about the "why" with all school stakeholders, and that this needed to be taken into account throughout the strategic planning process. Participants felt that poor implementation could lead to a negative school climate and culture amongst school staff.

Though not explicitly addressed as a core theme of the experience, the level of experience in the field of education is an important piece to highlight. In this study, Charlie, Madison, and Tobi all self-identified that they had 11+ years of experience in the field, Jordan self-identified as having 6–10 years of experience, and Finley and Kris self-identified that they had 1–5 years of experience. As previously noted, Finley emphasized that as a "newer" teacher, she felt that restorative practices implementation enhanced her ability to manage the classroom. In the voluntary questionnaire, she identified that she feels "very comfortable" using restorative practices in her role as a classroom teacher, and she was "very satisfied" with the experience of restorative practices implementation. Conversely, Madison, who described herself in the interview as a "veteran" teacher, did not feel that restorative practices had improved her ability to manage or build community within her classroom. She felt that she had already been "doing restorative practices," but that "it used to be called something different." In the voluntary

questionnaire, Madison identified that she felt “somewhat comfortable” using restorative practices with her classroom, and she felt “somewhat satisfied” with the experience of restorative practices implementation. Tobi was also a “veteran” teacher; she identified that she felt “very comfortable” using restorative practices in her role, and she was “somewhat satisfied” with the experience. Based upon this phenomenological study alone, the level of experience of an educator cannot nor should it be causally linked to their potential “comfort level” using restorative practices or their potential “satisfaction level” of the implementation experience. However, the researcher identified that there could be additional research surrounding a school employee’s level of experience in the field of education and their lived experiences during school-based restorative practices implementation.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

Historically, the measurement of a school’s culture and climate has been tied directly to school stakeholders’ perceptions about school safety, and school safety is often measured through referral, suspension, expulsion, and arrest rates in schools. However, the TeachPlus (2018) study indicated that a reduction in these elements alone did not improve the climate and culture and emphasized that school staff members’ perceptions of climate and culture could become very negative if exclusionary discipline practices were eliminated without the replacement of a research-based alternative. Quantitative research has repeatedly shown that restorative practices are a research-based alternative that have the potential to reduce the use exclusionary discipline practices in schools (Boyes-Watson et al., 2015; Brown, 2018; Costello et al., 2010; Fronius et al., 2016; Pranis, 2005; Wachtel, 2016). It has been noted throughout this study that previous studies focused on restorative practices have overwhelmingly measured

implementation “success” through a reduction in exclusionary discipline methods and the disparities in school discipline data.

Participants all discussed the reduction of exclusionary discipline measures and the disparities associated with them in relation to the role of the “why” behind implementation. Participants felt that it is critical to communicate this “why” throughout implementation. However, at no time in this study did any of the participants discuss whether or not their school’s implementation of restorative practices had impacted their school’s referral rates, suspension rates, and/or expulsion rates. The school’s discipline rates were never referenced by study participants. There was also no discussion about disparities in the school’s discipline before, during, or after implementation of restorative practices.

The impact of restorative practices on school culture and climate was a core theme identified in their study. Although school climate and culture have typically been tied to school discipline data (Boyes-Watson et al., 2015; Costello et al., 2010; Fronius et al., 2016; Pranis, 2005), in this study, participants all felt that their school culture and climate had been impacted by restorative practices implementation without any discussion of their school’s discipline rates. Instead, participants typically indicated that they had a general feeling that the school culture and climate had improved based upon what they perceived to be improved relationships with both their students and their colleagues. Study participants’ satisfaction with implementation was also associated with the level of success that they felt that they had in their community-building circles and whether their students felt emotionally safe. Based upon this information, the researcher recommends expanding qualitative research surrounding school employees’ perceptions of school safety, climate, and culture using research-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices. More specifically, the researcher recommends that future

research utilize a hermeneutical approach to phenomenology to derive meaning from school employees lived experiences during restorative practices implementation.

Limitations

This study answered the research question “What are the lived experiences of school employees during the first two years of restorative practices implementation?” through the use of a transcendental approach to phenomenology. Though six participants is a sufficient number for a sample in a phenomenological study (Creswell, 1998; Morse, 1994), further information-rich descriptions of the lived experiences and perspectives of school staff members would provide additional information for school administrators and restorative practices researchers to review. It is important to note that while this study invited both certified (administrators, school counselors, teachers) and non-certified (paraprofessionals, custodians, food and nutrition) employees to participate, only certified employees expressed interest and participated in this study. Further research should include an intentional effort to include non-certified employees as study participants to garner descriptions of their lived experiences as well.

This study focused on only the middle school setting; thus, similar studies could be conducted at the elementary, high, and post-secondary education levels. Further, this study site was located in a primarily rural state. Though there has been a considerable amount of research conducted in urban areas, a phenomenological study of this nature has not been conducted in an urban area. To address this limitation, the researcher suggests that future phenomenological research include replication of this study in urban areas (Fronius et al., 2016).

Another limitation to be noted was the necessity to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of study participants. Though this study did not seek to find meaning itself, the inability to include more detailed descriptions about participants’ demographics limited the

inferences that could be made from the lived experiences of study participants. For example, the data that were collected in this study indicated the possibility that the level of experience of a school staff member could potentially impact their level of satisfaction with the experience or their perception of the effectiveness of implementation. However, the limitation of anonymity made it so that the researcher was unable to delve too deeply into this area of questioning to avoid the disclosure of any identifying information of the study participants. The researcher recommends using more detailed descriptions of study participants' roles and demographics in future studies. The researcher strongly recommends this if a hermeneutical phenomenological approach will be used; this would aid in deriving meaning from the lived experiences of study participants in respect to study participants' roles and levels of experience in the field of education.

Though not necessarily "limitations" of this study, the data collection techniques could be improved to extract additional, and potentially deeper, responses to the interview questions. For example, providing study participants with the questions prior to the in-person interview would give them time to reflect on what information they feel was most critical and the experiences they might like to share. Also, the utilization of a telephone interview format in the two-tiered interview approach could be replaced by an email inquiry to study participants containing the follow-up questions to the first in-person interview. This would improve the convenience of the data collection for the study participant, as it could be completed at their convenience and at the pace of their choice. With these two data collection changes, participants would have the opportunity to take more time to process how they want to respond to each question. This may or may not result in more detailed responses in the first interview; however, it would provide the

researcher with more direct quotations and textural evidence for the descriptions of the lived experiences of each study participant from the second interview.

Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

Practice. Though this study did not seek to find specific meaning in study participants' lived experiences, the results illustrated similar experiences for five of the six study participants. The first through fifth participants included positive descriptions of their lived experiences. The sixth participant's descriptions were not perceived by the researcher to be positive. However, the core themes of the experiences of all study participants are transferable. The implications of this study speak primarily to ways in which school staff members might prepare for and/or navigate their experiences during school-based restorative practices implementation. This can be broken down into two categories: school leaders, and educators and support staff.

School leaders. School leaders may utilize the data collected in this phenomenological study to assist in the strategic planning efforts of implementing school-based restorative practices. This can be viewed from two perspectives. First, they may explore the importance of the role of the school leader in the implementation; this includes both their own personal preparation and those specific elements suggested to share the vision with staff members. Secondly, the school leader may utilize the descriptions provided to gain a deeper understanding into what their staff may experience and the elements necessary to gain staff buy-in and support staff members' learning and growth. For example, Madison was very dissatisfied with the experience, she felt disconnected from the implementation process, and she did not find success in practicing circles within their classroom. This information would be helpful to a school leader, in that they may work more diligently to ensure that all staff feel a part of the implementation process itself and to provide ongoing supports to staff in using circles in classrooms.

Educators and support staff. Study participants revealed the importance of emotional safety and a sense of belonging in the use of restorative practices in a school setting. This indicates the importance of all school staff members proactively building community within their classrooms beyond just the periodic use of circles. For example, those staff members who experienced high levels of satisfaction during the phenomena discussed their use of affective statements and questions on a regular basis, the application of circles in classroom instruction, and the employment of these techniques to solve problems with and between students. This information speaks to the importance of embracing restorative practices as a way of doing all things in the educational setting, as opposed to it being used as one technique during a required circle during SEL instruction.

Policy. Though this study did not seek to derive meaning itself from participants' lived experiences, there were areas that were touched upon that tie directly to nationwide efforts to use research-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices. Some districts and states throughout the U.S. have begun mandating the use of restorative practices as a research-based alternative to exclusionary discipline practices. Though well-intended, with an emphasis on reducing disproportionate rates of referrals, suspensions, and expulsions, the idea of mandating restorative practices in schools is perplexing at the very least when examining the fundamental hypothesis itself. In an effort to model the fundamental hypothesis of restorative practices (IIRP, 2018; Wachtel, 2016), Jordan emphasized the importance of doing things *with* staff, rather than *to* them or *for* them. He explicitly stated, "I think there's a fine line between having champions in your building who are really pushing the work and providing that professional learning versus, like having, *making* everybody do it." It is also important to note that the manner in which restorative practices are introduced and implemented may affect school staff members'

perceptions of the impact on school climate and culture. As previously detailed, Charlie noted a prior experience with a school that spent a lot of time writing policy and details in their school handbook without spending the necessary time on the “why” and without taking the time as leaders to self-reflect on their own practices.

Theory. The researcher used the theoretical restorative justice theory framework to ground this study. This framework included the intercultural origins of restorative justice, affect theory, and reintegrative shame theory in an effort to holistically illustrate how restorative justice theory has evolved over time and the theories that support the work. Restorative practices implementation in an educational setting allows for the translation of restorative justice from a macro view of social responsibility to the micro level, a transference from abstract theory to everyday practice (Alphen, 2015). Wachtel (2016) asserted that restorative practices is “a social science that studies how to build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision-making.” When aligning this phenomenological study’s results with the foundational components of restorative practices, it becomes clear that school leaders should model best practices of restorative practices by strategically planning implementation *with* their school staff members through the use of restorative practices themselves. For example, modeling the use of affective statements and using circles or formal restorative conferencing with staff members provides an ongoing illustration of the theoretical basis for the practices and implementation.

Recommendations for Further Research

The researcher has several recommendations for further research surrounding restorative practices implementation in the school setting. The first recommendation is to replicate this study in additional settings. For example, this study was held in a middle school setting in a primarily

rural state. It is possible that the results may look different if it were held in an elementary, high, and/or post-secondary school setting, and the lived experiences may be different in an urban setting as well. Being that school-based restorative practices implementation is in the nascent phases of research, it would be beneficial to complete additional longitudinal, qualitative studies surrounding staff members lived experiences. There are a few longitudinal studies that exist about restorative practices in schools; however, there is no known research on staff members' perceptions of their experiences after several years of implementation. The researcher recommends examining the lived experiences of study participants during the years prior to and further along into implementation of restorative practices.

It is also recommended that researchers begin mixed methods analyses that include the quantitative analyses of the reduction of exclusionary discipline practices following restorative practices implementation and align them with qualitative analyses of staff members' perceptions of school climate and culture and their lived experiences. As previously discussed, the TeachPlus (2018) study identified that staff members' perceptions of school climate and culture were poor when these reductions occurred without the implementation of a research-based alternative. Because school districts throughout the United States are increasing professional learning efforts to include restorative practices in an effort to reduce referrals, suspensions, and expulsions, there will be multiple schools and school districts to analyze in this manner.

Finally, this study identified the importance of modeling the fundamental hypothesis of doing things *with* people, rather than *to* them or *for* them. The researcher recommends that further analyses include transcendental and hermeneutical phenomenological studies of the lived experiences of school staff members' in districts that have implemented restorative practices following legal or district mandates for implementation versus schools and districts who have

implemented restorative practices “by choice.” As with the other recommendations, schools and districts are increasingly utilizing restorative practices as a research-based alternative to exclusionary discipline practices. Thus, there will be many more opportunities to collect data from a more diverse array of settings and participants.

Conclusion

Restorative practices initiatives are underway throughout the U.S. in an effort to decrease the use of exclusionary discipline practices and to reduce the disproportionalities associated with these practices. Staff buy-in has been identified as a critical component for restorative practices implementation. This transcendental phenomenological study aimed to answer the research question “What are the lived experiences of school employees during the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation?” This study answered this question through an expression of the *essence* of the lived experiences study participants during the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation. School leaders can use this study to aid in the strategic planning and implementation efforts, so that they may have a deeper understanding about what they and their colleagues may experience.

Though this study did not seek to derive meaning from the results, nor did it seek to develop theory based upon the outcomes of the study, the descriptions created through this study will contribute to the growing body of research surrounding restorative practices implementation in educational settings. An increase in restorative practices implementation in schools and districts nationwide, will allow for additional research opportunities throughout the US. Further, when examining new mandates for restorative practices implementation, it will be important to explore the impacts of required implementation on the lived experiences of school staff members.

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Appendix A: Basic Consent Form

Purpose and what you will be doing:

The purpose of this study is to collect descriptive information from you about your experiences during school-based restorative practices implementation. The information collected in the study interviews will create descriptive information for educators to use in the strategic planning of school-based restorative practices initiatives. I expect there will be six study participants. We will begin enrollment on April 1, 2019 and end enrollment on April 8, 2019. No one will be paid to be in the study. At no time will you interact with other study participants.

Participants will receive written email notice of their rights as participants prior to the in-person interview logistics. These rights will be reviewed at the first of two interviews. This study will include one in-person (face-to-face) interview per participant, lasting approximately 45–60 minutes in length, and a follow-up telephone interview, which will last approximately 30–45 minutes in length. Please note: Participants will not at any time have access to a list of the interview questions that are used in either interview.

Each voluntary participant will be able to choose the most convenient location and time outside of contracted school hours for the interview. This will be in an agreed-upon neutral location. The neutrality of time and place is intentional, so that you are a comfortable place to be honest and authentic in your responses.

To further ensure your confidentiality, please maintain study communication (electronic or telephone) through personal email accounts and personal telephone numbers only.

Risks:

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information when you join the study. However, I will protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption or locked inside a secure electronic device. When the principal investigator looks at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. I will only use a secret code to analyze the data. I will not identify you or include any type of related identifiable information in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after we conclude this study.

Benefits:

You do not stand to benefit directly, financially or socially, from your participation in this study. However, an indirect benefit could be the opportunity to give voice to your experiences during school-based restorative practices implementation in a way that will future support educators during the implementation.

Confidentiality:

This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety. Recordings will be deleted immediately following member-checking and transcription, all other study-related materials will be kept securely for 3 years from the close of study, and then will be destroyed

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the questions we are asking may feel personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions.

If you withdraw from the study after the first interview, you may choose whether or not the data collected during the first interview may be used in the study's data analyses.

Contact Information:

You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you may contact the principal investigator, Kathleen Bevins. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email obranch@cu-portland.edu or call 503-493-6390).

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

Participant Name

Date

Participant Signature

Date

Investigator Name

Date

Investigator Signature

Date

Investigator: Kathleen Bevins



Appendix B: Interview 1 Introduction Script

Interviewer Script:

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. This study aims to create robust descriptions of school employees' lived experiences during school-based restorative practices implementation. The study does not intent to derive meaning or conclusions from your responses. I will begin this interview by reviewing detailed information in your Consent Agreement.

Risks: There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your personal information when you join the study. However, I will protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption or locked inside a secure electronic device. When the principal investigator looks at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. I will only use a secret code to analyze the data. I will not identify you or include any type of related identifiable information in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after we conclude this study.

Benefits: You do not stand to benefit directly, financially or socially, from your participation in this study. However, an indirect benefit could be the opportunity to give voice to your experiences during school-based restorative practices implementation in a way that will future support educators during the implementation.

Confidentiality: This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation is greatly appreciated, but I acknowledge that the questions I are asking may feel personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions. If you withdraw from the study after the first interview, you may choose whether or not the data collected during the first interview may be used in the study's data analyses.

Do you have any questions or concerns about this Consent Agreement? Please sign here.

We will now begin the interview.

Appendix C: Interview 1 Questions Tool

Interconnectedness: The Lived Experiences of Six Middle School Employees During the First Two Years of Restorative Practices Implementation			
INTERVIEW #1 QUESTIONS			
<u>INTRODUCTORY</u>	<u>TRANSITION</u>	<u>CRITICAL</u>	<u>CLOSING</u>
Q1. Tell me about restorative practices.	Q1. Can you walk me through a typical community-building circle?	Q1. Please talk about your experiences with professional development surrounding restorative practices.	Q1. Please tell me about any other experiences or insights you would like to share in this interview.
Q2. Can you tell me about how restorative practices are used in a school setting?	Q2. Tell me about how you build community using restorative practices.	Q2. Tell me a bit about your experiences and observations about “staff buy-in” during restorative practices implementation.	Q2. Are there any other experiences you have had during restorative practices implementation that you feel would benefit this study?
Q3. Can you talk to me a bit about the connection between restorative practices and school climate?	Q3. Please talk about your experiences with using restorative practices to respond to problem behaviors.	Q3. Tell me about your observations of school climate during restorative practices implementation.	Q3. Are there areas you feel that you would like to further address in the next interview?
Q4. Tell me about the connection between restorative practices and school discipline policies and procedures.	Q4. Please describe the ways you have participated in restorative processes.	Q4. Can you talk a bit about any experiences during restorative practices implementation where you may have questioned the use of restorative practices?	Q4. Is there anything you would like to elaborate on today that we have discussed?
Q5. Tell me about the connection between restorative practices and classroom management.	Q5. Please describe any observations you have made that stand out to you during restorative practices implementation.	Q5. Can you talk a bit about any specific experiences you have participated in when restorative practices have been used to respond to problem student behaviors?	Q5. Do you have any additional questions, concerns, or insights at this time?

Appendix D: Interview 2 Questions Tool & Note-taking Matrix

Interconnectedness: The Lived Experiences of Six Middle School Employees During the First Two Years of Restorative Practices Implementation	
INTERVIEW #2 NOTE-TAKING MATRIX	
INTRODUCTORY QUESTION	INTERVIEWER NOTES
<i>Please describe any experiences you have had since our last interview that you feel would benefit our discussion about restorative practices today.</i>	
TRANSITIONAL QUESTION	INTERVIEWER NOTES
<i>Individualized Probing</i>	
CRITICAL QUESTION(S)	INTERVIEWER NOTES
<i>Individualized Probing</i>	
CLOSING QUESTION(S)	INTERVIEWER NOTES
<i>Please share any additional information that you feel would benefit this study about staff members' experiences during restorative practices implementation.</i>	

Additional Probing Question Prompts:

- Could you tell me a bit more about . . . ?
- I heard you say . . . Please tell me a bit more about that.
- Can you please describe what you were feeling when . . . ?
- Can you please describe what you were thinking when . . . ?

- Please tell me more about your observations of . . .
- Could you please talk to me more about . . .?
- Can you please describe your observations when that happened?
- Looking back on the outcome of that experience, could you please describe . . .?
- I'd like to hear more about . . .

Appendix E: Individualized Transitional and Critical Probing Questions

Charlie

Transitional Question

- In our last interview, you discussed “restorative practices mindset” and mentioned the “moral imperative” associated with restorative practices. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

Critical Questions

- Please tell me a bit more about the role of school leadership during restorative practices implementation.
- In our last interview, you discussed how restorative practices implementation, when done intentionally, can positively impact school climate/ culture. Can you tell me a bit more about your experiences with that?
- You also mentioned that if not implemented intentionally, restorative practices implementation can create a toxic staff culture. Can you please talk a bit about your experiences with this?

Finley

Transitional Question

- In our previous interview, you emphasized the importance of human connection. Can you tell me a bit more about how restorative practices can build human connection?

Critical Questions

- As an identified “newer” teacher to the profession, please talk a bit about how restorative practices helped you develop your classroom management techniques.
- Please talk about the importance of ongoing professional development.

Jordan

Transitional Question

- In our last interview, a central theme that you discussed was the concept of using restorative practices to cultivate a sense of belonging. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

Critical Questions

- Please tell me a bit more about what you have observed to be necessary for sustainable restorative practices implementation.

- In our last interview, you discussed “the why” behind restorative practices. Can you tell me a bit more about that?
- What are your observations of the impact of restorative practices implementation on exclusionary discipline practices?

Kris

Transitional Question

- In our last interview, a central theme that you discussed was the concept of emotional safety. Can you tell me a bit more about what that concept means and how it connects with restorative practices?

Critical Questions

- You mentioned the impact that restorative practices has on school culture/ climate. Can you tell me a bit more about that?
- Please tell me a bit more about what you have observed to be necessary for creating staff buy-in for restorative practices implementation.

Madison

Transitional Question

- In our last interview, a central theme that you discussed was the role of leadership. Can you tell me a bit more about how that connects with restorative practices?

Critical Questions

- You mentioned the impact that restorative practices is intended to have on school culture/ climate. Can you tell me a bit more about that?
- Please tell me a bit more about what you have observed to be of critical importance to support all staff in restorative practices implementation.

Tobi

Transitional Question

- In our last interview, you discussed how restorative practices give students voice and develops a sense of trust. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

Critical Questions

- In our previous interview, you emphasized the importance of circle norms and traditions. Please tell me a bit more about that.

- As an experienced teacher, please talk a bit about the importance of ongoing professional development surrounding restorative practices.

Appendix F: Participant Confirmation Email

Date: April 10, 2019

Dear _____,

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study surrounding school employees' experiences during their school's implementation of restorative practices! Though the study only requires a total of 75–105 minutes of participants' time, there are opportunities for participants to review their responses for accuracy (optional), which may increase the amount of study participation time. Below you will see a timeline for study participation and requirements:

1. Schedule In-Person (Face-to-Face) Interview.
 - Agreed-upon time and neutral location (not to be held during contracted school hours)
 - Discussion regarding study participant's rights and the participant consent agreement
2. Interview #1
 - Review and sign participant's consent agreement
 - 45–60- minute, audio-recorded interview
3. Interview Transcript Review
 - Participants will receive a transcription of Interview to review for accuracy.
4. Schedule Follow-Up (Telephone) Interview.
 - This interview will be scheduled within one month of Interview #1.
 - Review of study participant's rights and consent agreement
5. Interview #2
 - 30–45 minute telephone interview
 - Interviewer will take non-identifiable notes
6. Interview Notes Review
 - Participants will receive a copy of the researcher's interview notes to review for accuracy.
7. Reception of data compilation
 - Participants will receive a compilation of the data from both interviews to review for accuracy.

As previously detailed in the initial email you received, a specific protocol and procedures will ensure and maintain your confidentiality throughout the study. To further ensure your confidentiality, please maintain study communication (electronic or telephone) through your own personal email account and personal telephone number(s) only.

I look forward to working with you! Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Bevins
Principal Investigator
Doctoral Candidate
Concordia University– Portland

Appendix G: Participant Recruitment Email

Date: April 1, 2019

Dear Iowa Public School Employee,

As you know, school climate improvement measures are closely linked with students' social and emotional supports and also student discipline policies and procedures. Ineffective exclusionary discipline practices are being eliminated throughout the United States, and many schools are replacing punitive responses with restorative responses to problem student behaviors. Early research shows promising results!

You have been identified as a school employee who is employed in a school that has implemented school-based restorative practices. Based upon your experience and level of expertise, you are invited to participate in a confidential study surrounding school staff employees' experiences during school-based restorative practices implementation. This study will not aim to develop theory itself about school-based restorative practices implementation, nor will it seek to evaluate a school's implementation initiatives. The primary aim of this study will be develop information-rich descriptions of school employees' experiences. Participant data will be collected through an interview process that will require a total of approximately 75–105 minutes of the participant's time.

Though you do not stand to benefit directly, financially or otherwise, from your participation in this study, an indirect benefit could be the opportunity to give voice to your experiences during school-based restorative practices implementation in a way that will future support educators during their schools' implementation.

A detailed protocol and procedures will ensure and maintain participant confidentiality throughout the study. To further ensure your confidentiality, please maintain study communication (electronic or telephone) through personal email accounts and personal telephone numbers only; do not respond directly to this email.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please respond to the principal investigator using a personal email address that is not associated with your school district.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Bevins
Principal Investigator
Doctoral Candidate
Concordia University– Portland

Appendix H: Permission Letter

March 15, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

Hello, my name is Kathleen Bevins, and I am a doctoral candidate at Concordia University–Portland. I am completing a study about the experiences of school staff members during the first two years of school-based restorative practices implementation. Your district has been identified as a public school district that includes schools who have implemented at least two years of school-based restorative practices.

The information collected in this study will be collected through an interview process that will create descriptive information for educators to use in the strategic planning of school-based restorative practices initiatives. I expect there will be six study participants. We will begin enrollment on March 17 and end enrollment on April 10. No one will be paid to be in the study. At no time will a participant interact with other study participants.

Risks:

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing a participant's contact information when they join the study. However, I will protect participants' information. Any personal information provided will be coded so it cannot be linked to study participants. When the principal investigator looks at the data, none of the data will have a participant's name, identifying information, or school. I will only use a secret code to analyze the data. I will not identify study participants, school names, or include any type of related identifiable information in any publication or report. Participants' information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after we conclude this study.

Benefits:

Participants do not stand to benefit directly, financially or socially, from their participation in this study. However, an indirect benefit could be the opportunity to give voice to school employees' experiences during school-based restorative practices implementation in a way that will future support educators during the implementation.

Please email your interest, questions, and concerns.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Bevins

Appendix I: Charlie's Textural Description

Theme 1: A restorative practices mindset

Subtheme 1a: Restorative practices as a "moral imperative"

1. So, in a restorative practices climate, the mindset is circled around how we support kids, the avenues that adults are willing to go to to do that . . . it has in my mind a very growth and innovative mindset to respond to what kids need.
2. Because now, you're looking at the whole child approach.
3. They have to be able to clearly articulate the moral imperative behind why it's important. And I mean that wholeheartedly.
4. And I think . . . no not that "I think" . . . I know for a fact that the way to do that is you have to pull in a moral imperative. It has to be something that is so . . . like, "If we don't do this, kids' lives are at stake." Or "It's life or death for children". It is our job to stand in the gap of this thing, and it's what gets at the moral responsibility type of thing.
5. And therefore, it lives, and it's not a one person thing, it is all of us believing that we've built consensus around this moral imperative.
6. I think the overarching idea is a premise of helping people overcome trauma and overcoming when wrong has happened to someone.
7. Young people affected by violence and death
8. People "living the hurt"
9. Loss of life unbearable and painful
10. Call to action by people to learn skills to help navigate conflict, get to root causes, come to resolutions
11. Relationships of critical importance
12. Use relevant topics to teach students (tough issues)
13. Connection to privilege and reform (American criminal justice system)
14. "The foundation of justice reform begins with a fundamental review of how we shape experiences for young people."
15. Not just survive → thrive

Subtheme 1b: Shifting mindset from punitive to restorative

1. So, restorative practices is the concept of getting back to a sense of right. And a sense of healing from that wrong that has occurred.
2. Particularly in schools, there is . . . it helps guide the direction to how we respond to student behavior, and how do we respond when students are involved themselves and/or the victim of circumstances.
3. One I'll start with how we respond to student needs particularly.
4. -getting at the root cause of their behavior or the root cause how to systemically change when they respond negatively.
5. And so I think the culture must be built not on not having consequences being the staple, but rather "we will provide consequences and hold kids accountable, but there is a teaching and healing part that comes along with it".
6. When I think of community circles, what I think of is groups of individuals who have a stake in or who care for something . . . if there's a sense that there's an upcoming issue or crisis or some type of harm that is inevitable, there's an attempt to pull people together who might have some stake in that . . . some type of role in that or who may be a major player in getting to solutions . . . or getting to resolution.

7. So the steps involved in that . . . a series of interactions of these individuals that lead a very broad conversation to something that becomes more intimate over time that at some point gets people comfortable with a solution or at least moving towards it.
8. It's not a one-time thing. It feels like a series of interactions.
9. Very intimate and requires some type of facilitator that can help people process through and identify their emotions in whatever the conflict is or the situation.
10. Met with students and engaged in conflict resolutions
11. Conflicts steeped in miscommunication and assumptions
12. Pride and ego also inhibit problem-solving
13. Positive outcomes with good next steps
14. Work *with* people to support students in planned problem-solving sessions
15. Get to the notion that harm has occurred
16. Healing required → common human experience

Theme 2: The role of leadership in restorative practices implementation

Subtheme 2a: The importance of a leader's self-reflection

1. And so if you don't truly believe in it, and you're trying to get other people to believe in it, because you want to do other metrics-
2. -you want to bring down suspension rates to make your discipline data look different or-
3. -you want to attune to your MTSS structures, and so you do this thing because you- that's the new trend or that's the new mantra in education-
4. I would definitely advise leaders to spend time with themselves and truly make sure you believe it, so you're not conflicted.
5. I think that administrators should be very attuned to themselves, but one thing that I did not do, which I would advise other leaders to do, is to attune to your personal self around that, and truly make sure that you yourself can coalesce around the idea.
6. I know that when I first started this work and getting interested in restorative practices and understanding trauma-informed care, when it was new to me, it made sense when I read it and the trainings I went to and the people I engage with- it made sense to me.
7. I know for myself, that I continue to be challenged on the idea of restorative practices at work and even in my own household, with my own children. There have been some times that I have been conflicted with that, and then I've reverted back to previous mindsets, particularly with my own children, even though I know better, and I've been trained differently.
8. And so I would just give them time to, I would say truly take time for you to understand it and truly believe it, like truly believe it to your core. And I think that is anything you think is of value for young people.

Subtheme 2b: Communicating "the why" behind restorative practices

1. And so my observations have been, I've seen settings that have done it very well, and I have seen settings who have not done it well . . . yet. And I think a lot of it has to do with intentional outcomes . . . What's your intention? What's the purpose?
2. And helping adults understand that those facets are critically important before jumping into that type of initiative, and not understanding the "why" behind it.
3. I think the "why" is critically important in helping people- adults, students, and parents- I shouldn't say adults and parents differently, but teaching staff and parents, understanding the "why" behind why that's important. I don't think you can ever spend too much time doing that portion of it before getting to the technical pieces of it.

4. A prime example for transparency, I can recall one middle school that I helped lead who wanted to do this work [not the same middle school as the participant sample] and did not spend a lot of time on the “why” and went straight into the handbook and the technicalities and getting positions and creating time and space and all that stuff, and they did not do a very good job of explaining the “why” or in building capacity in adults and students, and so that building is now struggling. Now, they’re getting there, and they probably will get there to a place of doing that, but we probably could’ve avoided a lot of bumps and bruises along the way if we would’ve “gone slow to go fast”.
5. That meaning spending a lot more time on the “why” and building capacity before getting to the technical pieces of the “whats” and “hows” and all that stuff.
6. I think it is very critically important that the leader establishes the vision and the “why”.
7. Importance of thinking critically/creatively, collaborating/communicating
8. Design student-centered learning opportunities
9. Vision and fundamental redesign of schools necessary

Subtheme 2c: Active, ongoing effort to create staff and community buy-in throughout the school community

1. And so I think it is the leader’s job to do that, and as I mentioned before, help people build capacity within themselves to also be leaders in that same realm. So much so that when the leader steps away from that role, the work doesn’t end because they built capacity in other people to finish that kind of work.
2. Yeah, so, I think this is not different than any other thing that you see buy-in for.
3. I think you have to be very intentional about consensus-building.
4. And what does that mean. And I think consensus is deeper than buy-in.
5. Buy-in, in my opinion is “I will do this because you asked me to do it, and I’m not going to sabotage it.”
6. Consensus is “1. I’m gonna do it, and I’m not gonna sabotage it, and oh by the way, I can actually lead it. So much so that I can explain it to other people, and I’m willing to, when people doubt it, and they come to me in the community, I can defend it”. You know, that’s consensus.
7. Buy-in is “yeah, I’m gonna do it so I don’t lose my job, I’m gonna do it because I’m being compliant,” but-
8. -consensus is “I can lead it, I can defend it, I believe in it.” So I think it is critically important that you do that.
9. -“Well, I don’t know why we’re doing this; our stupid principal made us do this. And so I don’t know why we’re doing this restorative practices thing and dealing with kids’ trauma”. And so, that’s what I think.
10. Education in state of flux requiring more attention
11. Leadership important for any school initiative
12. Similar to leaders shifting to competency-based practices

Theme 3: Impact(s) on school climate and culture

1. I think it helps shape culture, school culture, in a way that is very positive because now you’re for the first time in a very long time attuning to what kids need ~~and~~
2. I think it also allows us to help kids get passed trauma from a victim standpoint, and I think that positively impacts school culture.

3. Now, that, also that being said, it can have a very negative impact on school culture if there is not a very intention effort to foster what it really means to be a restorative practices kind of thing.
4. For example, some people might, and I've seen it happen in my particular career, where restorative practices is assumed to be "we're not gonna hold kids accountable," and so there's no . . . if there's not accountability then the culture becomes very toxic because we're not attuned to what kids need.
5. We're not being attuned to adult needs. And so therefore there becomes a very toxic culture.
6. Like any initiative or idea, particularly in dealing with schools, poor planning results in poor outcomes.
7. Referenced a school in Rock Hill, SC that is shifting from a punitive mindset
8. Role of leadership
9. Continuous improvement
10. Shifts in socio-economic status and conflicted mindsets of community members
11. More racially, socioeconomically, and linguistically diverse
12. Diversity → achievement gap
13. Disconnect and resentment to diverse population
14. Toxicity due to tension and force of change
15. "Those that disagree with our equity imperative are left to stew in their unhappiness."
16. Role of communication and cultural norms
17. Power imbalances

Appendix J: Finley's Textural Description

Theme 1: Building community

Subtheme 1a: Cultivation of a sense of belonging and an emotionally safe space

1. I think the connection is huge. I think to get a better, stronger, and more positive climate, restorative practices is definitely a key component of that because if students feel respected and safe, and they're in an environment where people . . . they feel heard, because a basic need as human being is to feel heard and to have some sort of control.
2. That impacts the overall school culture, because just in those individual conversations, that like spreads out into, you know, the classroom setting, and then when it comes to the whole system of a school, and it just makes everybody feel that they belong to this place, and that we're all working together. Everybody, you know, just feels included and a part of something.
3. You know, I feel like my students feel safer because we are constantly doing restorative practices just because of the way we function in the classroom.
4. I just recently had a whole class restorative conversation and circle for the entire block, and students, you know, verbalized how they were feeling, and that they weren't feeling safe and valued, and that made an impact from then going forward on how other students were acting in the classrooms. They were more . . . they became more accountable, and they became more empathetic towards each other. And so it just helped, it established an overall climate in the classroom of safety and trust and respect. It's not perfect, but it's helped more than any other strategy that I know of.
5. And it's been wonderful, I mean, and while we're doing circle, if things get a little shaky, we always revert back to the norms and remind each other that we're in this space together, and we all need to feel safe, and you know, they're quick to make the change. It doesn't take much.
6. Promotes empathy and trust → Safety
7. Emphasis on seeking to understand each other
8. Take time to listen to one another
9. Co-create solutions/decisions

Subtheme 1b: Importance of giving students a "voice"

1. And let the student really have a voice. I think they really value and need that.
2. And then you sharing your voice and finding, you know, commonality between that and trying to build empathy with each other and trying to, you know, hold each other accountable. You know, not just the student, but you as well in the situation that happened.
3. I think that it's an empowering thing, because for the student, they feel like they have a say in their life or their choices or the things that happen to them, especially in school when normally they feel like they don't have a choice, and that things are just being done to them.
4. And it's empowering for me the teacher, just because, I don't know, I feel like I'm doing the "right thing," and I feel validated in my feelings as well when I have those conversations with kids. I just feel like when I see my kids feeling empowered, it empowers me. You know, this is the "right thing," and we're doing good work here, and so for me it's just about, you know, equity of voice and doing things together, you know not one person to another . . . sharing in this, like, conversation and experience.

5. I mean, it's about that human-to-human connection, and I think that's the key part of it. When you see how what you're doing affects somebody, or when you see how the other person is feeling, like, intuitively we can't deny a little bit of empathy coming out in that moment just because you know, we're both human beings. We know what it feels like.
6. With restorative practices, at least we get a chance to talk with one another and be accountable for our own actions, be genuine with each other, and I think it goes a lot farther.
7. And then even on an individual basis, with students who have their own particular, unique struggles, me just setting up meetings to talk with them, and so they can hear where I'm coming from, and I can hear where they're coming from, like, it's definitely helped on that level too.
8. Equal voice → Equal power
9. Value what is happening and decisions being made
10. Mindset of doing thing "with" people

Theme 2: Classroom management

Subtheme 2a: Transitioning to restorative practices in the classroom

1. And you know, a community is based on individual respect and relationships and then they all connect together.
2. So, okay, we're doing a lot of these right now, like weekly, so for example, yesterday, we start off by reviewing our norms. We always start with that, so we just have a reminder of the things we are trying to honor within, you know, the community-building circle.
3. Then we start, we go around with some of the easier questions- something light until we get comfortable, because if we go too heavy too soon, you know, people like maybe want to build a wall. Start with something light, and then, you just build.
4. I've never shied away from the personal or too uncomfortable questions because I feel like that's where you get the greatest . . . or like the most meaningful types of responses from students, or the most authentic or sincere, I suppose is a better way of putting it.
5. And it becomes very evident when you're doing these community-building circles that they want to talk about these things. They want to talk about what matters to them or what matters to the greater good or whatever, but yeah, so we do them all the time, and it always makes my heart feel warm when I watch it because they just take to it so naturally.
6. It takes time to build that, we haven't perfected it either, but if you ease into it, you start easy, and you build and build with how difficult it gets or how personal it gets. You know, you'll get there quicker than you think.
7. And it's been wonderful, I mean, and while we're doing circle, if things get a little shaky, we always revert back to the norms and remind each other that we're in this space together, and we all need to feel safe, and you know, they're quick to make the change. It doesn't take much.
8. Restorative practices, to me, it's all about . . . I equate it a lot with equity because the point is to have opportunities or conversations in which both parties can have a voice and come up with solutions together, so in that case, like especially in situations with students.
9. You know, it really helps build a sense of community because ideally in a community, you want everybody to have equal participation and equal impact and value, and

restorative practices really helps guarantee that because it's designed to establish that sense of mutual trust and respect and empathy and all of that.

10. Build connections as human beings
11. You're trying to do things with kids and not to them or for them.
12. And so you're having a conversation about, you know, what happened? How did that affect you?
13. And then coming together and thinking of you know, what can we do together and what solutions can we come up with to make the situation better for everyone.
14. So just always, you know, having circle discussions, and if something should happen, we talk about it as a class.
15. Yeah, so recently, like I said, on a whole-class scale
16. **STORY:** we did a whole-class restorative circle in response to just a pattern of behaviors or struggles we faced in the classroom. Students were very chatty and not listening with respect for one another . . . not necessarily using language that was offensive or aggressive, but that when we try to talk and share our opinions and feelings, we weren't listening with respect. We were sidetracked or being disruptive or distracting. So, we had planned that day just to do the lesson, but I noticed, okay, we were starting to fall into that pattern, so I just stopped. I was just like, okay, we need to address this right here and right now. It's like, let's go around, what do you think we've been struggling with and how is it making you feel. And I was shocked by how many kids, you know, spoke up. Sometimes, you know, they feel uncomfortable, or they are afraid to be isolated from their peer groups, or they feel embarrassed or anything like that. But they were very honest and vulnerable about what they were experiencing, and as soon as one kid started to talk about that, everybody else was silent and listening. Because they listen to each other more than they ever listen to me, the teacher. So, through that process, them just hearing each other, you could see in a lot of the kids who were especially being or having the most struggles I guess, just starting to get this light bulb moment in their head. Just like, oh, you know, I get this. And so they were responding really well to each other. And since then, you know, there's definitely been a significant change in the overall classroom climate and environment. It's not perfect, but you know, whenever we struggle, we go back to that same process.
17. **STORY** you know, recently I had a student who, again, was exhibiting a pattern of behaviors that, you know, weren't helpful for the class and contributing to students maybe feeling unsafe or unvalued or frustrated. Me, myself, as an individual person was feeling frustrated with the person and what the relationship was like. So I brought her in, I asked for help from our outside restorative practices person and another classroom person who was trained in restorative practices, and . . . Because sometimes it helps with the one-on-one conversations to have a mediator present. So things, when you think that things are getting too heated or emotional, they can have that person to calm things down and settle, and everybody's back on track. So, I called her in, and we had a conversation, let the student go first. You know, what have you noticed, what are you feeling? And then it was my turn. And we listened to each other. And you know what do you think needs to change? And what can we do? And here's what I think, and can we meet in the middle somewhere? And in that conversation, we definitely came to an understanding, and I felt that. Did it solve the situation totally? No, but that takes time. But it was worth it because just that one conversation helped.

18. I think people, a lot of times with restorative practices, perceive it as, like, you're doing things for kids, like you're not really giving out consequences, or you're not really holding them accountable, which is not the case at all. Restorative practices is still about holding high expectations and holding people accountable and students to that expectation, but it's just about collaborating together about how we can get that through alternative means that doesn't just include them getting suspended and then not really addressing the issue at-hand.
 19. But once I made the shift to restorative practices and was actually engaging in these restorative conversation, not only on an individual basis, so like me and students individually, but as a class. . . . Like it totally changed the entire environment of my classroom.
 20. And it just makes a difference, like it's not perfect, you know, that student that I maybe had that restorative conversation with, it's not like it's solved everything forever . . . We're still gonna have struggles, but because we engage in those restorative practices, we're able to come together and talk with each other, as opposed to just, you know, tuning each other out without even wanting to hear each other.
 21. So, there's definitely been moments, but I stick with it because I know the good it does, and it may not be drastic right away, but over time, you see the difference that it makes. And I feel like at least if not on a school level, on a personal level with my classrooms and myself, you know, we're in a good place.
 22. Stand-off with 3 female students in class → Restorative conversation with one student → Trickled to the other 2 students who came and apologized
 23. Spreads a cultural of empathy, respect, and accountability
- Subtheme 2b: Experiences as a "newer" educator
1. For me, it's made all the difference, and I'm a fairly new teacher, and last year, classroom management was the biggest challenge, because you don't really think about that piece when you're becoming a teacher. And so, I struggled.
 2. It's made the difference, like I feel very proud of the relationships I've built and the classroom environment I've built. And it really is all because of restorative practices. Like, I couldn't name you any other reason really.
 3. Has made the biggest difference in classroom management
 4. Before was just setting rules and handing out consequences
 5. Felt too simple and ineffective
 6. Create relationships with students, so they have a stake in the class
 7. Keep harmony without having to be asked to
 8. Can leave the room and trust the class will be alright
- Subtheme 2c: Understanding the concept of "consequences"
1. I was struggling to find ways to gain control of the classroom, and I felt like I wasn't getting anywhere with the traditional systems for consequences and punishments, like it didn't really change anything.
 2. It was just a step in the right direction. Because the alternative is is that I just keep on punishing this kids all the time, and we don't really address the issue or how they're feeling or how I'm feeling. You don't really get to the root of it with these traditional consequences. It just perpetuates the cycle of these behaviors.
 3. Whether it's just like, you know, the history of all these traditional consequences that have been so engraved into the education world . . . that mindset . . . that it really . . . that

it take a lot of bravery and courage to just like take that leap and be like “this is what we’re going to do, and we’re gonna stick with it”.

4. But there have definitely been situations with students, you know, where I struggled with what is the appropriate consequence to this, you know, a conversation isn’t necessarily going to be enough. But I don’t want to rely on those traditional systems or forms of consequences, that I know don’t really work, but I don’t know what are the other options? Because I guess I don’t know what we are *allowed* to do I guess? Or what would be appropriate? I don’t think I’m phrasing it right, but
5. You wanna hold kids accountable, because sometimes you want to be stern, and you don’t want to be a pushover, or you don’t want, you know, the mentality that you like let them get away with it so-to-speak. . . . So yeah, I have felt conflicted about, you know, what is this really doing with students you have a restorative conversation with and maybe we did come up with a solution and it didn’t work. You know, it made me feel like, well, that didn’t really do anything, and maybe I should have been harsher or stricter or dealt a greater consequence. But then I always think to myself, like, every time I stick with it and keep to this process, it does make a difference. You may not see it right away, but it happens.
6. So it’s just finding that balance between like wanting to stay true to restorative practices, but there’s also the expectations of the school for certain behaviors as well and the consequences that have to go with that. That can be frustrating because you feel like your hands are tied. Because you feel like you want to be restorative, but the rules or the policies say this needs to happen, so that’s also an area of confliction or frustration.

Theme 3: Personal/ professional growth

Subtheme 3a: Importance of ongoing restorative practices professional development

1. But, you know, my professional development has I think, still been fairly limited. I don’t see that I am engaging in it quite as much as I would like. And that’s to no one’s fault. It’s just like, we just don’t have the time, or there’s other things.
2. So we’ve done it as a whole staff for sure, talking about the philosophy behind it and how to put it into practice.
3. I think all, well I can’t say all, but I think a lot of people in education inherently have the values that are tied to restorative practices, but because the system for so long hasn’t been that, that it’s hard to actually put it into practice because there are all these barriers.
4. We also have a lot of new staff, and that has been a challenge as well, because you have to, if you’re not familiar with it, you have to learn this process or this system. And so, if you’re not continuously making efforts as a building to make this a priority, make this the way you do things, especially when you have new people coming in, you’re never really doing it to its fullest potential, which can hold, you know, everything back.
5. Restorative practices described as a journey
6. Continuous improvement and PD important to take advantage of all restorative practices has to offer

Subtheme 3b: Individual journey

1. So, I feel like my professional development, although very impactful, you know, I’m new to the profession, and so I just recently in the last two years have been introduced to restorative practices and have really taken it to heart.
2. My values are aligned with it, so it was a very easy sort of connection and buy-in for myself.

3. I think that my professional development with restorative practices has been much more of an individual journey because I so connected with it when I first heard about it. I challenged myself to actually apply it, and when I applied it, and I saw the results and how beneficial it was, it motivated me to continue my learning in that area. And so for me, like I said, it's mostly been an individual journey . . . reading the literature, having conversations with other like-minded individuals and other experts, and you know, just thinking and collaborating together on how we can use this in our classrooms and our school. So, for me, yeah, it's mostly been individual.
4. I think with restorative practices, because it's not what education is used to, it's a struggle to get that buy-in. So if your values aren't already aligned, or maybe you don't think they are, it's maybe hard to move forward with it.
5. But I think once you challenge yourself to actually apply it and put it into practice, the benefits come pretty quickly, and I think that helps motivate it. So, it's all about taking the chance to do it and consistently do it and stick with the process . . . because it doesn't get solved right away. Like, it doesn't fix everything right away, but if you stick with it, you see the good that comes from it. That's what did it for me.
6. Yeah, there's definitely been some feelings of being conflicted about certain situations.
7. Stick to it
8. May not always work and isn't the only answer
9. Create greater success than without it
10. Success will come in ways you don't expect
11. So I think people's hearts are in it, but it's like, kinda you have to "walk the walk" then, and you have to commit to doing it consistently and just pushing through it and pushing through it. And I think that's where we are as a staff, we just need to commit to it, and just as individuals, you know, challenge ourselves to try to figure this out. And like consistently go with it and see what happens from there.

Appendix K: Jordan's Textural Description

Theme 1: Cultivating a sense of belonging

Subtheme 1a: Using restorative practices to build community

1. Restorative practices, I think, is a way to build community,-
2. I think the great thing about restorative practices is that it really values connection and values doing things with people rather than to them or for them.
3. And once that community's built and established, when problems arise, it provides a way to solve problems that doesn't involve excluding students from the community, but keep students in the community.
4. Everyone wants to feel a sense of belonging.
5. It allows us to feel more connected, allows us to understand each other better to build community.
6. And I think when we feel like we belong to something and have meaning and purpose, then that inherently is going to cause school climate to improve.
7. I think you have to have community established and relationships established in order to repair that when problems happen.
8. Because they felt a connection to her,-
9. And so, we have to build community.
10. We gotta keep them in the building, and we need restorative practices.
11. And so I think until everyone is able to feel connected and is able to hear each other, you can't really have peace or connectedness, and I think that is what restorative practices allows for.
12. Like I said before, our first year with restorative practices, we only focused on community-building. We didn't do anything responsive.
13. -we've really lost that connection, and we've seen students feel more disconnected from school and less, like they're not part of a community, so I think restorative practices allows us to strategically build community.
14. Complex topic and framework
15. Schools who struggle view it as just an intervention or a response when things go wrong

Subtheme 1b: Using restorative practices to strengthen and repair relationships/community

1. Restorative practices strengthen relationships
2. So I think once that's there, and the community is in place, I think looking at that from a responsive lens, really just bringing people together and talking through their perspectives of the situation- what happened, what were they thinking at the time, what have they thought about since, what needs to happen to make thing right, and allowing everyone to feel heard.
3. -And so I think just like we would want with kids, we need to build relationships with our staff, and we need to listen, and we need to understand why they feel the way they feel.
4. And we are doing responsive pieces now.
5. I share this story often because it really was transformational for me was when we had a young lady who had her cell phone taken. And was very upset about it and went to our SRO [School Resource Officer] and let her know what happened and our SRO was actually able to track the phone.
6. -these students were really able to understand the magnitude of what they had done and were able to repair that relationship.

7. I think restorative practices is a framework for teachers, regardless of your background skillset, a way to strategically build relationships.
8. I think the great thing about restorative practices is that it really values connection and values doing things with people rather than to them or for them.
9. And once that community's built and established, when problems arise, it provides a way to solve problems that doesn't involve excluding students from the community, but keep students in the community and-

Subtheme 1c: Giving school community members a "voice"

1. Everybody's voice is heard.
2. Restorative practices give everybody a voice and allows them to work together to solve the problem.
3. I think one really important piece that's missing from traditional school discipline that restorative practices hits on is that it gives victims a voice. A lot of times when problems happen, the administrators or disciplinarians kind of just take control and apply a suspension, but it doesn't allow the victim to have a chance to truly be heard or have a voice, and so when that student comes back from suspension, they don't feel any safer or more comfortable because they've never had anybody hear what happened, and they never got to hear from the person who caused the harm why they actually did what they did.
4. And our SRO actually suggested doing a circle, and we brought the students together, and through that process, the girl was extremely eloquent and described to these boys how she had seen them do things in the past to other students that she'd kind of laughed at and thought was funny, but she never thought they would do these things to her, and how hurt she was that they actually, you know, took her phone.
5. And to hear them, to have them hear from this girl, the impact that it had,-
6. -and in hearing how she was impacted by that situation really allowed them to see the impact that
7. A way to shift how we communicate and interact
8. Community/belonging: fundamental conditions for well-being
9. Restorative practices systemically improves behavior and academics

Theme 2: Implementation considerations

Subtheme 2a: Sustaining restorative practices implementation

1. I've questioned our implementation of restorative practices and my ability as a leader.
2. But I recognize as a leader, if you don't have anybody following you, if you don't have anybody working with you, then you're not really a leader, and you're not really getting anywhere.
3. We need to support courageous leadership and people who are willing to go down that road . . .
4. I'm somebody who's very like a systems person, and I want it to be at a systems level, but I also recognize that if you force people to do restorative practices, then you're really doing things to them and not with them.
5. And so I think there's a fine line between having champions in your building who are really pushing the work and providing that professional learning versus, like having, making everybody do it.

6. Essential pieces: leadership, admin/central office buy-in, understanding of the adolescent brain and trauma-informed practices, commitment to the curriculum, focus on community building before responsive circles

Subtheme 2b: Staff buy-in

1. You know we've done professional learning through the International Institute of Restorative Practices.
2. We've also done our own professional learning.
3. And I think the best professional learning around restorative practices is just really allowing people to experience what it's like to sit in circle. I think a lot of people are skeptical until they have an opportunity to sit in circle and see what it feels like and to feel what it's like to be heard and to actually hear people and build that sense of community and sense of trust. So I would say, to me, the best professional learning with restorative practices is actually experiencing it.
4. Everybody wants to feel a sense of competency.
5. Everyone wants to feel a sense of efficacy and control.
6. Just because a person wants a student suspended, just because a staff member wants punitive measures done to a kid, that doesn't mean they don't love kids, that doesn't mean that they don't want to do well. It just means that that's been their experiences. And I think we need to understand, you know, why they are feeling the way they feel. Is it because they are feeling a lack of control? Is it because they're feeling a lack of community? Is it because they're feeling any number of things . . . And so I think listening and trying to understand, and then trying to meet them where they are and help them recognize that punitive measures don't really change behavior, and if we really want to get to the place where we're seeing the results that we want, we need to operate from a different lens.

Theme 3: Understanding the “why” behind restorative practices

Subtheme 3a: What is the “why”?

1. Schools fail when goal is to reduce referrals and suspensions.
2. Success when its view is to support well-being.
3. Safety, belonging, efficacy, meaning, purpose.
4. Trauma-sensitive practices.
5. Teach SEL.
6. Because if we really want to improve education, this is the way we need to go.
7. We can't teach kids literacy, we can't teach kids math if they're not in school and if they don't want to be there.
8. We have to teach them the skills that restorative practices have.
9. It's completely connected to social-emotional learning, which those are the skills that employers are saying they want.
10. Microsoft has done the research; several different companies have done the research.
11. These are the skills employers are saying they need from employees, so it covers all of those pieces.
12. And so we want kids who are future-ready and kids who have the intellectual capacity to succeed in the world.

Subtheme 3b: Meeting the needs of all school community members

1. So, I think one thing that we've seen recently in the last ten years with ESSA and Iowa Assessments and in all these standardized tests is that we've really been focused more on test scores than students, and-
2. I think one of the most frustrating things for teachers is when we tell them just "oh, build relationships, build relationships," but we don't really have a systemic way to do that.
3. Again, we want, every person has the same needs.
4. I think restorative practices really provides a way to meet all of those needs,-
5. Providing meaning and purpose for people . . . I think that's what is important. I think that's the hardest thing.
6. And so I think understanding where people are and really trying to hear them and understand them and meet them where they are.
7. And it was two students who had been in trouble quite often, and I was feeling very frustrated at the time and not in a very restorative mindset and called the students down and really tore into them . . .
8. Like, they were both in tears, and I thought to myself, like, "This is why we do it."
9. I understand that people feel frustrated, and we need to acknowledge that,-

Subtheme 3c: Ineffectiveness of exclusionary discipline practices

1. -and so, when I talk to schools and districts, a lot of them say, "Our suspension numbers are out of control" or "Our discipline [you know] systems are out of control, we need something new".
2. They say, "We're gonna do restorative practices because we need to cut our suspension numbers," and . . . if that's the case then we can just stop suspending students, but nobody feels any safer in what they are doing or more confident in what they're doing.
3. And they looked at me, and my frustration was obviously not getting through to them,
4. And at one point one student said to me, "So are we suspended or what? Are we gonna go home?"
5. And I'd been so aggressive with these kids, and it had no impact on them.
6. And if I had suspended them, or yelled more at them, or whatever a traditional discipline model would have done, they would never really realized the impact of their actions.
7. I think the evidence is clear, and I think the frustrating piece to me is how much data and research and evidence is out there that shows the negative impacts of suspension and the negative impacts of punitive discipline models, and excluding kids from the classroom environment.
8. -but there's no evidence that suggests removing a student from the class changes the behavior or makes them feel more connected or anything like that.
9. Restorative practices . . . there's evidence, there's data behind it. And I think it's the right work, and we need to . . .
10. We have to keep kids in school.
11. Restorative practices not a discipline framework
12. Not (specifically) a way to reduce suspension . . . if it is viewed this way, it will fail
13. Promotes safety, creates community, provides efficacy for SEL and student empowerment

Appendix L: Kris' Textural Description

Theme 1: Using a restorative approach

Subtheme 1a: An approach to all conversations

1. To me, restorative practices is an approach to all conversations.
2. If a student is suspended, we do restorative conversations when they return to the building, so that it when I am most involved.
3. But I feel like we can prevent a lot of suspensions through these restorative conversations.
4. It's not a new fad going thru. It's just how we want to be approaching kids and approaching families, and really, just approaching each other.

Subtheme 1b: Circle processes

1. Most of the community-building circles I've been a part of start with going over the rules or expectations of the group.
2. You know, just the . . . the talking piece . . .
3. We do a lot of "keeping it in the circle"; you know, ideas can leave the circle, but not specific stories or things like that. It starts out pretty shallow.
4. One of our favorite ones is, "If you were the weather today, what would your feeling be?," and then really diving in.
5. But then, just being a part of a circle was a powerful experience . . .
6. Whether the topic is something really positive and uplifting, or something, you know, that's really touchy subject for some people.
7. Students/staff know the process, norms, and the process before and after the conversation
8. They know what happens during the conversation.
9. Circles are a "platform for these practices"

Subtheme 1c: Resolving conflict

1. -but I feel like I do them a lot with different friend groups or two students who are having a conflict, or really just any misunderstanding or miscommunication.
2. There have been a couple of times where I felt like I could see the end goal and what these two students were both wanting, and I feel like in one situation, I may have pushed the student to have the conversation sooner than they were ready to. But I think that's more of a "me" thing, not a restorative practices thing.
3. To try to prevent things like that- a lot of times we know of student conflicts before something really escalates, so it's really just being preventative and proactive, you know, in those situations.
4. Really just empowering the kids to also recognize that, I feel like now we have lots of kids who come up and request . . . "I need to have a restorative conversation with this person," or "I do X, Y, or Z because of, you know, my feeling, or whatever". But now they reach out and do it themselves, which is really cool. You know, that's what you want, so that's our goal- to keep rockin' on that path.

Theme 2: Positive impacts on relationships

Subtheme 2a: Student-student relationships

1. -but I feel like I do them a lot with different friend groups or two students who are having a conflict, or really just any misunderstanding or miscommunication.
2. Restorative practices can help students build a community to be strong together.

Subtheme 2b: Student-staff relationships

1. I mean other than just watching teachers have restorative conversations with students, and students and teachers going from dreading that class that they have with each other, and it's awful . . .
2. And you're trying to get this kid in class no matter what you had to do, and the teacher really doesn't want 'em in there because they know it's not gonna be good.
3. After having the restorative conversation, and them seeing each other as "humans" . . . Then, you know, it's the student's favorite teacher. And they come back to school the next year to see them, because they miss them. Just, like, it's so powerful. So, that's all.

Subtheme 2c: Staff-staff relationships

1. We rely on it a lot with our staff too and how we've improved our school climate and culture.
2. To come to a consensus and move forward.
3. I just had a conversation with a parent today who requested that her child have restorative conversations with two different staff members. She feels and recognizes that her daughter has kind of been targeting those staff members, which has then resulted in suspensions, and we're kind of in this vicious cycle.
4. I feel like, really, the two go hand-in-hand because restorative practices is not just for students.
5. Restorative practices heal staff and bring them together.
6. Build a strong community together
7. Results in staff and culture shift

Theme 3: The importance of emotional safety

Subtheme 3a: Self-reflection

1. I feel like it's not only restorative or conversations between two people, but it's also how people can be restorative within themselves.
2. It helps people reflect within themselves to be able to have these conversations with other people,-
3. But also with students just individually. You know, sometimes they're really struggling with miscommunication within themselves or something with their identity that they're really struggling with. We kind of set it up as a restorative conversation between those two things they're feeling and how to come to a compromise within themselves. I feel that is where I use it the most.
4. At the beginning, some people were not as open to it because they kind of just thought of it as another thing on their plate to do . . . or another, you know, checkmark to have on their sheet or whatever.

Subtheme 3b: Participant openness and body language

1. One thing I have noticed a lot of, specifically with staff, but also in my own SEL group, is that at the beginning of the year, or the first circle, when you all come together, everybody's body language is very stiff. They're very guarded, but then as it goes, you can see, like, physically everybody relaxes, and then when they come in, and it's . . . how am I trying to describe it? . . . Just like their body language is open, whereas before it was very closed. I just think that's something that's really important to notice to when you're having a circle is if somebody's really closed off to not push them to participate or anything . . . because they're clearly not ready for it. Whatever's going on with them that day, you know, you just have to be really attentive to that.

2. But it kind of started off rough . . . Everybody closed off . . . Kinda wondering how this is gonna go . . . Umm . . .
4. And really help other people understand what a safe environment feels like for them,-
5. How to be comfortable with their vulnerability in these conversations . . .
6. And how to just be brave through them.
7. And I feel like through these really vulnerable restorative conversations . . .
8. To be open and honest with each other on what we need as professionals, and what our kids need,-
9. But just getting to know people, and I think it's really important to recognize, especially with kids, that the first couple community-building circles, there's lots of giggling . . . you know, it's really uncomfortable for the kids. But really, even after one time, they can start, you know, really diving into things, and then it just kind of morphs into whatever the kids need that day. I think that's one of the fun things about it.

Theme 4: Implementation considerations

Subtheme 4a: Creating staff buy-in

1. But it was very clear to see that through all of the conversations we were having and the "why" behind it that it's not another initiative.
2. You know, honestly, I don't know exactly what got the staff to buy in.
3. It seemed to just happen really organically and naturally.
4. I don't know if it was because staff could feel it being so impactful for them that kind of what changed their mind . . .
5. No matter what the topic is, I feel like circles are really how we're choosing to be, and just that feeling, just kind of what got our staff to buy in.

Subtheme 4b: The role of leadership

1. Leader's buy-in is crucial for success.
2. Leaders are bought in and embrace the practices.

Subtheme 4c: Ongoing commitment to professional development

1. I have been a part of really . . . of a building that's had some really great opportunities for professional development in this. Umm . . .
2. And I've seen that a lot this year too because we haven't been having those conversations as much, and I feel kind of like we took a step backwards in our school climate and culture. So I feel even more strongly that that is kind of what moved our building really forward in the first place is how you know . . .

Appendix M: Madison's Textural Description

Theme 1: Implementation considerations

Subtheme 1a: Strategic planning as a critical component

1. Communicating the purpose of the implementation → I think that often, this is just “one more thing,” and like I said, I think over the years that it’s been called something else. I mean the same things have been done. So if you take more off the plate rather than adding more . . . ? I mean, to say to somebody “You’re already doing this.” That this is what this is, people will be like “Oh! Okay!”
2. It’s not just another thing you check off. It’s not a just . . . “I had a circle. I did this, and I did this.”
3. Involving stakeholders throughout the implementation process
4. I mean, it’s the same thing. . . . If you stand in front of me, and mean, like, in general . . . okay, if you stand in front of me and tell me to do this, and this is what this needs to be . . . And you make me feel like I’m not doing it? I think it makes it more difficult, and it brings me back to “You’re already doing this . . . I’ve seen you do this . . . I see this, I see that . . .” That’s when I’m gonna . . .
5. But if you say, “Okay, now we’re gonna do this . . .” And research says this, and if you send me an article or a five-paragraph email and you want me to read it? On top of everything else? Not gonna do it. I’m just, I’m not. And that’s a fault of my own. And if you send me Ted Talk video, and you want me to find more time in my day to do that? I’m probably not gonna do it.

Subtheme 1b: The role of leadership

1. If . . . even if the person who is implementing it is passionate, I mean 110% passionate, that doesn’t really matter. That’s what I’m learning . . . if you don’t have buy-in across the board? It doesn’t matter how passionate you are. But, umm . . . I don’t have an answer to how you get that buy-in.
2. What this is, people will be like “Oh! Okay!”
3. I think we need to have a lot of hard conversations. And I think that we need to have people in “power positions” and leadership roles that are willing to have those conversations. And it needs to not be taken personally. This is just your job. This is why you’re here. It’s nothing personal. I, personally, would appreciate that.
4. This first thing that pops into my head, regardless, is if you don’t have leadership who are on the same page, you are not going to have a successful time on any level.
5. If you don’t have strong leadership, especially in a building that has historically been a tough spot, you have to have the type of personality that says, “We’re not gonna do this anymore.”

Subtheme 1c: The appropriate application of restorative practices

1. Oh, I think there’s a huge connection between restorative practices and school climate; *however*, what I’m experiencing is it’s a thin line . . .
2. It’s a major gray area because it’s totally based on how other people perceive restorative practices.
3. But where the gray comes in is the enforcement of the consequence, and it goes down to who is in charge of the consequence and what their relationship is with the parties involved . . . whether it’s the adult or the student.

4. Umm . . . I think if it's done and done correctly, it can be a phenomenal thing. But if it's done kind of half-hearted or, excuse my language, half-assed, you're gonna run into some problems.

Theme 2: Applying restorative approaches

1. When I think of restorative practices, I think of just having a conversation on the same level of the student and getting to know what actually is going on . . . who the person is, what led them to the behavior, rather than just handing out a punishment or a consequence . . . getting to the root . . . if possible. That's my experience.
2. I still think that there should be consequences for actions . . . what level of discipline, I can't say. It just depends. I think you take every situation individually. You can't say "if you do this, this is what happens . . ."
3. If I take myself personally, I have a lot of restorative conversations that are in class and quick or outside of the classroom and a little bit more personal and lengthy.
4. Alright, we do SEL in the mornings from 7:50 until 8:15, and the schedule is designed to do two days of *Second Step* and two days of circles.
5. I mean, I have restorative conversations. I think it's just "good teaching".

Theme 3: Strong dissatisfaction of the experience

Subtheme 3a: Feeling detachment from the implementation process

1. I don't have a lot of experiences, like, first-hand with restorative practices because we have [organization's name] attorneys come in, and I have for whatever reason fortunately or unfortunately a part of any of those conversations . . . this year.
2. If the implementation is weak . . . I mean, if you tell me in an email "this is what I need you to do," and you sit in front of me . . . If there is weak implementation, it is going to be weak across the board.

Subtheme 3b: Feeling undervalued as an "experienced" educator

1. Restorative practices are something that I think I have probably always done, they've just been named something else.
2. Classroom management in general is tough. I think it goes back to that personal . . . how people will approach it and say to me . . . Maybe it's because of the years of experience I have, but I think it has a lot to do with my personality in connection with the experience and with the experience of the students who have the conversations that I work with.
3. So is my classroom management, like, phenomenal? Do I want someone coming in and recording me and showing what I do in the classroom, this is it? Probably not. But does it work for me? I would say 95% of the time. I think it ties back in to what I was saying earlier.
4. But I feel like you've observed me, and you can come to me and say, "You're already doing this. We just call it this. It's the same thing." If you make me feel like I'm already doing it, then like, I think it's gonna be better.
5. If I'm doing something wrong? And you have a better way of me doing it? By all means . . . let me know. Don't worry about what someone's gonna think of you. It totally depends on who implements it.

Subtheme 3c: Unsure of restorative practices effectiveness in their classroom

1. I haven't participated in a restorative conversation this year. I don't know if that's a good thing? Or if it's a not great thing? But I think that I have a very good relationship with the majority of my students. So, classroom management . . . I think there is definitely a tie.

2. I think if you don't have strong classroom management, you're probably going to be having more restorative conversations with students. And do you learn from that? Hopefully . . . But like I said, I don't know, that's that gray area.
3. I worry that restorative practices are used as a Band-Aid on a gushing wound, and I don't know that is how restorative practices are supposed to be."
4. I don't know, there's gotta be a change from outside in the community. And I just want to feel like I'm making a difference.

Subtheme 3d: Frustration during classroom circles

1. Mine would probably be one that you would videotape as one that has failed. Not for a lack of trying. My group? They don't wanna talk. I mean, like, they would rather just sit back and pass the talking piece. I mean, and like, not even say "pass" . . . literally just passing. That makes circles and community-building extremely difficult.
2. But then . . . so if there's no buy-in, and they're not comfortable . . . And I don't know if it's age? I don't know if it's the group make-up? I don't know if it's the time of day? I have no idea. But I mean, like normally we have had like three adults in the room at that time, and I mean . . . nothing.
3. We can't . . . it's like out of twenty-five kids I get like maybe four or five that want to participate on a regular basis, which means that circles are really non-existent. And I'm like . . . and then I hear other teachers like "Oh, I had a great circle today!" and "Oh, blah, blah, blah," and I'm like . . . [shrugs].
4. But if you look at my roster, I think you would say, oh . . . they don't talk any time anyway . . . They're just not comfortable.
5. And then I have one outspoken student who is transgender who . . . that ends up being the total focus. And so, I think that's . . . then some of the kids are like "I don't wanna talk about that" because they're not comfortable with that. And that always seems to be the focus of her conversations and questions. I mean, she's like "die-hard". I don't know if I answered your question . . .

Appendix N: Tobi's Textural Description

Theme 1: Positive impact on school culture and climate

Subtheme 1a: Experiencing the beginning of implementation

1. Well, in our school setting, umm, we do a lot of relationship building, and we really want to make sure that kids feel comfortable coming back and talking with us and working things out.
2. So, I never wanna leave a kid feeling like they just got the short end of the stick without having a conversation about it . . . always repairing stuff. I feel like restorative practices are always about repairing things, so that people feel like they can trust you.
3. So I feel like school culture and climate really does improve the more we implement our restorative practices. And we're just in the beginning of this, and we're . . . treading water, trying to figure it out. But I think that it's good. I think that we're going in a good direction.
4. Usually, a lot of kids don't know each other. I don't think people realize how few of these kids actually truly "know" each other. And that's a shock even now . . . if you don't see them in the same classes all the time, you make assumptions, so you know, finding ways for them to find some common ground and building those relationships.

Subtheme 1b: Giving students a "voice"

1. We do like the kids to come up with a lot of the questions as we get more comfortable with what we're doing.
2. I feel like my room is a place where people should feel like I'm . . . that they can trust me even if it's really hard. Because sometimes it's a lot harder than it sounds. So much harder than it sounds.
3. So I think here, we try really hard to lay some groundwork, so kids feel like they can always have a voice.
4. They sometimes check each other. . . . A lot of times, we'll have kids bring their "stuff" to the circle . . .

Theme 2: Daily applications of restorative approaches

Subtheme 2a: Using restorative circles in the classroom.

1. I feel like this is truly, like, pinnacle stuff. It matters that much. Especially where we are. Because we've got a lot of wounded people. And we have wounded staff too. I mean . . . people aren't gonna tell you that, but you know, we all come with our wounds.
2. But it does do miracles for your own soul when you're able to do things *with* other people. I think it needs to be more important.
3. Build a sense of trust through classroom circles
4. Hearing what people have to say and truly listen
5. Help students build relationships they haven't had

Subtheme 2b: Commitment to circle norms and traditions

1. Well, we always go over our classroom norms, as seen in multiple locations throughout my room in hot pink . . . Kids could recite those in their sleep. Every time we have a community circle, we go through those, we have our talking piece, and the kids know what the norms are.
2. You know, typically, someone's gonna ask, you know, "I wanna start with the talking piece . . ." Umm . . . they say which direction they wanna go before we say the question, so people aren't like, "uhhh" . . . We try to make sure everybody knows the question,

‘cause that’s a killer in seventh grade . . . So sometimes we’ll get to . . . there’s always the same kids that are like, “Wait a minute, what’s the question again?” But we know it’s coming, so they’re like, “Hey, this is the question.” So we always start with something easier and move up.

3. We have a ceremony in our room. We had the kids decide what they wanted to do. Like, how do you wanna open circle? How do you wanna close circle? So we have . . . They always want to do circle without lights on, so we have little tea lights, like the battery ones. And everyone, the first person starts, and they all turn them on. It looks really cool when they do it! And that’s how we close our circle out too. So we’ll go back the other direction, and everybody puts their stuff away, and it’s really nice. Except for when they chuck ‘em across the room. [laughter] It’s usually really good.”
4. Reiterated the circle tradition in SEL group with the battery tea light candles
5. Students like taking turns leading circle
6. Students encourage one another

Subtheme 2c: Evolution of circles in the classroom over time

1. When we start at the beginning of the year, they’re like “What? What are we doing? How are we doing this?” But before we do that, it’s gotta be something simple and easy and relaxing . . . not risky because they’re like “no . . .” . . .
2. I feel confident that I’m doing the right thing even if it feels hard in the moment. It doesn’t feel bad when you’re doing a good thing, but sometimes the emotions feel bad, and you feel bad for the kids, and you’re watching their tears and it’s hard.
3. It’s hard for the kids. You’re getting them into a new system, and they’re like “What? You want me to what? Fuck you. If I’m not gonna talk to you in a personal setting, why do you think I’m gonna sit here, and I’m gonna tell you all this stuff?” But slowly, you know, if you build those relationships, it gets better. It gets better. They’re listening, even if they don’t look like they’re listening. It’s okay. I think those are the hardest things. Yeah . . . *ease* into it.

Theme 3: Implementation considerations

Subtheme 3a: The importance of ongoing commitment to restorative practices by all school stakeholders

1. In-house, this year, we haven’t had much PD with that at all. At the very beginning of the year, we did a couple of circles together, just to kind of show people what it was like, but we haven’t had much this year. There’s so many other things going on.
2. I would like to get back to a little bit more than that, but we have so many things on our plate that I’m worried that it’s been a little too diluted. Not on purpose, because certainly, we all agree that it’s something that’s really important. But . . . shit happens. And districts say what has to happen. It’s not literacy.
3. How can we implement that as something that truly is part of your culture? It is so important in our culture that someone will step in my room because I need to go talk to this kid. And they’re not gonna be like, why? Why is that so important? Because it’s gonna be really important. So . . . either it is or it isn’t. How important is it really? To the building.
4. You know, people that really, that care about the way that their kids feel . . . sometimes just because you feel really passionate about doing something, that doesn’t always translate to every person, and helping those other people along is . . . I’m sure that that it probably feels a little defeating, but most of it is not that they want to be a pain in the

butt, but that it's a hard thing to start to do, especially if you're a private person, and you're not really open with your feelings.

5. People are more comfortable, and even if they have a huge . . . you know, shit's gonna hit the fan . . . It doesn't matter how good you are at any of this stuff, people are going to have absolute mental breakdowns or freak out, and they're still welcome back. You know, so, sometimes, that's perceived in more than one way though.
6. You know, some people are like, "Why are they back?" But they may not know all of the other things that go into restorative practices. It doesn't mean that there's not consequences. It just means that we're gonna talk to you like a human being and treat you like a human being and try and keep a balance.
7. I feel like administrators do need to see these things happening, and if they're not happening in those rooms, figuring out why they're not happening. How can we fix things, so that they can?
8. Sees the work as very impactful but acknowledges the need for ongoing commitment from leaders to support continued learning opportunities

Subtheme 3b: Emphasis on continuous improvement

1. It's not gonna be easy when you start.
2. I think this is hard for some people because they have their own kind of trauma. And bringing that up . . . it can be really . . . I think sometimes some people might be afraid that they'll lose their own shit . . . I mean emotionally, not necessarily that they're screaming at someone, but like, crying and feeling weak . . . That's what people are afraid of . . . and it's okay . . . But it just takes some time to figure out how to mesh those things together . . . So don't expect miracles [laughter] . . . too quick . . . I don't have any miracles. But when kids start to see that you really are trying to see something from their point of view, and that you're not trying to put something on them that you really are trying to do something together, they do feel differently about it. They might still be pissed off at you, or they might be pissed off at whatever the situation is or at whoever, but someday, and it probably isn't going to be tomorrow, maybe ten years from now, they're gonna be like, "I knew, even though I was being an ass to you, that you were trying really hard to help me, and I appreciate it." I know that that will happen.
3. I think people found it scary. You know, because it's new, and you don't want to screw it up.
4. So, circles are one thing, you know, having a community circle is very different from having a restorative conversation when something really shitty went down. It's not the same. And the restorative conversation is way scarier, and if you think it's the kid that's the only one nervous about it, that is not true. Because you do not know what's gonna happen. You have no idea what's going to happen in these circles, and the thought of the unknown is truly terrifying. And I think that goes for almost everybody. I don't think there's anybody that's like, "Woohoo!" You know, I mean, you're happy to do it, but nobody knows the outcome, so all kinds of shit could go down.
5. I think it's scary for people. I think not knowing how to do it, and . . . but you don't know how to do it until you do it. You just have to do it. Scary or not, the more often you do it, the better you get at it.
6. I do think though that it would be nice to have somebody that would be like, you know "I sat in the corner . . ." But it's hard to have an observer when you're having one of these. I think it would be awesome to have someone who could be like, "You know, that was an

opportunity where you could have said . . . da da da,” or maybe you know, “don’t be so direct right here” . . . It would be a nice learning opportunity to help you get better at it. I think for some people that’s really uncomfortable.

7. I feel like it is night and day from three years ago. It is not the same place that it was three years ago. And next year, it won’t be the same place either. It is going to change and evolve with the people that are here. I feel like we are very conscientious about what our culture is between us and between us and our students- the “we”.
8. I feel like . . . I just think things have to be . . . We’ve gotta revisit our professional learning for this kinda stuff on a pretty regular basis, because it’s easy to kind of, you know, just assume that everything is okay, and that things are going well . . .

Subtheme 3c: Onboarding and ongoing restorative practices professional development for staff members

1. I’ve gotten a chance to travel to do some of that, so International Institute of Restorative Practices. It was awesome to sit around and talk to other people that were working on this stuff and at different levels, kind of sticking their toe in the water. Seeing what it would be like.
2. So I think that that’s something that I hope that we’ll spend more time with our new people, unless you know, they’re gonna pair people who have done it for a while with those who haven’t done it much.
3. We’ve had a few different people come in, and anything that comes up, they always let us know if there’s stuff in the summer time.
4. I think people are, in general this year, pretty positive about it, but I think others don’t really know what they’re doing.
5. I really appreciate it when someone is willing to put themselves out there to try to help you get somewhere. You know, I don’t know everything. I’m far from knowing how to do everything, and I want to get better at stuff, and I don’t feel like you can always do that on your own. So that would be a nice addition somehow.
6. Is this something you’re selling your building as? Or is it something that just sounds really great, and it’s just “kind of” what you want it to be . . .?
7. Ongoing learning necessary for staff and continued buy-in

Appendix O: Study Participant Questionnaire

Demographics Descriptors	Questionnaire Choices			
Certified role at the middle school study site	Administrator	School Counselor	Classroom Teacher	I would prefer not answering.
Years of experience working in an educational setting	1–5 years	6–10 years	11+ years	I would prefer not answering.
Comfort level using restorative practices in your role	I am not comfortable.	I am somewhat comfortable.	I am very comfortable.	I would prefer not answering.
Satisfaction level during restorative practices implementation	I was not satisfied with the experience.	I was somewhat satisfied with the experience.	I was very satisfied with the experience.	I would prefer not answering.
Preferred pronoun usage in study documentation	He/his	She/hers	They/theirs	

Appendix P: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously- researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does “fraudulent” mean?

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

What is “unauthorized” assistance?

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work

Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*.

Kathleen Carroll Bevins

Digital Signature

Kathleen Carroll Bevins

Name (Typed)

October 10, 2019

Date